

Beware of violent street demonst

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On Politics

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The Malaysian traditional values of loving peace, stability and the maintenance of law and order must prevail

WE ARE still over three years away from the eleventh general election, yet the political temperature is climbing fast.

The run-up to the polls seems to have already begun. Reading and rereading of the Bumiputra pulse and mood, anticipating and countering the many Chinese demands and the not-so mind-boggling expectations of Malaysian Indians and other Malaysians.

While the ruling coalition parties are busy governing and some of its wayward leaders while away the day deciding which wife or mistress to share the night with or which nightspot to patronise, the Opposition parties hold hundreds of ceramah (political talks) nightly nationwide and hatch plans and select districts and towns to start demonstrations and even create violence in order to topple the democratically-elected government in the last general election in which they participated and made substantial gains.

The Opposition's weakness, I think, is its obsession to cause the downfall of

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. It should instead concentrate on preparing for the next general election if it believes in democracy as it often states it does.

It should vigorously and democratically pursue its political ideals and work to reduce the Barisan Nasional's majority, something more likely to succeed than taking on the Government through violence.

Keadilan, the party planning the demonstrations, is jeopardising our peace. I need to caution the party — don't be daft. Malaysia is not Indonesia nor the Philippines or Serbia.

I hope Datuk Fadzil Noor, Lim Kit Siang and Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail and Dr Chandra Muzaffar still have attachment and commitment like that of Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, the Menteri Besar of Kelantan, to democratic process and constitutional means of achieving power.

The election and more important, the Malaysian traditional values of loving peace, stability and the main-

tenance of law and order and racial harmony, the spirit of live and let live must prevail until Parliament is dissolved.

For DAP joining hands with Pas and Keadilan, I conclude, was and is a tragic political misjudgment and a betrayal of the Chinese.

The Sarawak DAP realises this and has therefore pulled out from the Barisan Alternative. I shall defend DAP's freedom to do what it wants, but whether it was a judicious move is another story.

Lim's good friend, French Socialist MP, Didier Bolland has told him and his son, Lim Guan Eng, that he is not happy with DAP's continuing close cooperation with Pas because of its fundamentalist brand of political Islam.

Bolland was quoted as having said, "I will not hide my concerns over the rise of Pas and its fundamentalist brand of Islam. I am unhappy with DAP's alliance with Pas because their ideologies are so different.

"For us, this is unacceptable, especially when one party wants to set up an Islamic state instead of a secular democratic government.

"I have told Kit Siang this many times: 'You cannot marry a fish and a rabbit. We were convinced that the DAP will end up the loser.'"

Kit Siang had told Bolland after the DAP's disastrous performance in the 1999 general election that he had followed a "disastrous course".

Kit Siang's problem, like his friends in the Opposition, is his obsession to see Dr Mahathir's political demise accompanied by humiliation.

In spite of Bolaud's advice, Teluk Kemang, Lunas and Sarawak, DAP appears to have learned nothing. It still wants to help Pas defeat Umno and then deal with Pas. Then it will be too late for the nation. Kelantan and Terengganu are not good yardsticks to measure Pas. It will be a different Pas when it gets power at the centre.

However, there is a common feature in all Malaysian political parties: the poverty of young talent in the upper echelons and hence hampering efforts for reform. In Umno, even among the second echelon only one is below 40 — Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and he will be 40 well before the next polls.

Whether Hishammuddin has prime ministerial timber or a potential Umno leader and bearer of the BN torch is another question.

He told me he has been able so far to construct a wall between himself and his relatives' and other politicians' sleaze. Well, he should be careful where he goes for holidays and with whom.

Hishammuddin should acquire better political instincts if he is to fulfil the expectations of all Malaysians.

I do not believe though it is desirable and even ideal to have multi-racial parties, not while Suqei exists, Pas lives and Umno, MCA and MIC are around. DAP remains an essentially Chinese party, Parti Rakyat Malaysia is almost exclusively Malay, while Keadilan is a Malay-majority based and Malay-led organisation.

Many of the Opposition leaders are not in private what they project in public. They always appear to need to watch their language. I must say they have managed to hold their tongues quite well so far. They are brought together only by their hatred of Dr Mahathir. The PM is their collective responsibility

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and action.

I would like to impress upon you what Bolaud had said: “It would really be a pity if Pas wins power and overturns whatever has been built. It will be a terrible waste for Malaysia.”

He advised the Government to be more flexible to contain Islamic fundamentalists — it has to prevent the young Malaysians and intellectuals from going to Pas, adding “We have seen how it starts and we fear how

it will end.”

I am sad the Opposition cannot posture itself as more honourable, what a let down. I am yet to be convinced the Opposition is a true Opposition group.

It should show itself as less rapacious for power and instead more interested in upholding a democratic process, not trying to achieve power via violent Indonesian-style street demonstrations which are being planned for April and beyond.