

25/10/2002

View use of English in a positive manner

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FOLLOWING Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement after the Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting that the Chinese component parties now have one week to come up with a proposal on how to implement the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English in Chinese schools (NST, Oct 23), the nation waits with bated breath for the next instalment in this seemingly endless saga.

Naturally, until this issue is resolved, there will be much said about the matter, with political pundits and analysts (both the authentic ones and the less credible kedai kopi variety) producing various theories as to what really happened, what it all means and where this is all going.

There is already talk of hidden agenda and ulterior motives, in spite of assurances to the contrary from BN leaders themselves.

The trouble with polemics such as these is that there is a tendency for things to get out of hand.

People discussing such sensitive issues often find themselves getting emotional and blowing things out of proportion. They will begin to read between the lines even when there really is nothing to be read and this may often lead to aggravated misunderstandings, confusion and the emergence of hostility and ill will.

It is important, therefore, that we see the problem not from the perspective of isolated races with different interests, but rather, we must see it from the perspective of one people living in one nation. We must look at the matter objectively as something that requires immediate, adequate and satisfactory resolution for the benefit of all Malaysians, irrespective of race or ethnicity.

That being the case, we must see what recently transpired in the BN as a good example of the coalition system at work, instead of seeing it as a precursor to worsening racial conflicts, as some overeager prophets of doom would have us believe.

For one thing, what happened certainly puts to rest accusations floating about for some time now, that certain parties in the ruling coalition dominate over all the other component parties and dictate to them what can or cannot be done. The response of all other component parties to the stand of the Chinese based parties on this issue is evidence of a strong spirit of cooperation in the BN and an exemplary level of readiness to listen to all parties towards reaching a consensus before any decision is made.

In addition, it demonstrates the fact that decisions made by the ruling coalition are by no means made haphazardly, or with sentiment clouding the vision of the decision makers.

On the contrary, meticulous care is taken to ensure that all opinions and options are considered before moving forward on any matter that involves the future of the Malaysian people.

Of course the matter being discussed is one about which many Malaysians feel very strongly. It would be naive to deny the fact that racial concerns are a huge part of the problem, and of course the irresponsible politicising of this issue by certain quarters does not help.

Nevertheless, we must have faith that a solution can be found by way of negotiation and compromise in the finest tradition of the BN. It is also hoped that the mature, calm and collected manner with which all BN leaders have handled the matter thus far will continue and that members of the

public also adopt a similar attitude towards this issue.

We must all make the choice not to see the developments on this issue negatively. Instead it should be seen as part of a natural process of growth, development and maturity of our multiracial society. At the end of the day, we all want what is best for Malaysia, for now and for the