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Playing the same old record

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IT is the same old story. And it is sounding like an old record, all this speculation about the general election being just around the corner.

It is the story of Pas and the DAP co-operating in the general election, even if not as allies, then at least having an electoral pact to ensure that the Opposition parties do not engage in three-cornered fights with the ruling Barisan Nasional.

The concept and idea are very clear and there is nothing complicated about it - marriage of convenience against a common enemy.

However, the spanner in the works is the fact that Pas and the DAP have an ideological polarity which neither seems able to compromise, which makes Pas and the DAP strange bedfellows.

But the underlying factor of this ideological polarity is actually greater than merely the inability to strike a partnership or pact.

It is tantamount to misleading their supporters as well as the rest of the citizenry.

For backgrounders, Pas and the DAP became allies in the self-styled opposition front called the Barisan Alternatif a year before the 1999 general election. Their other partners were Parti Keadilan Nasional and Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

The marriage lasted until September 2001 when the DAP decided to pull out under quite acrimonious circumstances.

The DAP accused Pas of reneging on their joint manifesto for the 1999 election when the latter decided to pursue the implementation of hudud in Terengganu apart from continuing with the promotion of the Islamic state concept.

The end of the three-year marriage gave the DAP the "freedom" to start its campaign against Pas' Islamic pursuits.

The DAP also took the opportunity to make an issue of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Sept 29, 2001 declaration of Malaysia already being an Islamic state.

Calling the campaign "No to 929", the DAP had been going to states which have mixed communities or majority non-Muslims to take up the issue.

DAP's "No to 929" campaign is not only targeted at Dr Mahathir's Umno, but also at the Chinese-based BN component parties - namely, the MCA and Gerakan - for endorsing Dr Mahathir's announcement.

Since then, the DAP seems to be strutting more confidently after a dismal showing during the 1999 election.

While all seemed to have fallen into place - the DAP back on its own and Pas back to co-operating with Malay-based parties - the nagging question which remains unanswered is, why is Pas still keen on wanting to co-operate with the DAP?

As pointed out in a pro-Umno website:

"Under the tenets of Islam, there are two types of non-Muslims. One are categorised as kafir harbi and the other kafir zimmi.

"The kafir harbi are those who oppose Islam, whatever Islamic values and principles that come along. Muslims are disallowed from being friendly with this group.

"The kafir zimmi are those who do not oppose Islam and Muslims are allowed to co-operate with this group."

It contends that Pas, being a hardline Islamic party, would surely have considered the DAP to be in the kafir harbi category, hence making it

wrong for it to forge co-operation with the latter.

That being the interpretation, the MCA and Gerakan would then be considered the kafir zimmi because they did not oppose the Islamic state declared by Dr Mahathir.

The next question that needs to be asked is, why did the MCA and Gerakan not feel averse to supporting the Islamic state declaration by the Umno president?

An Umno activist said it is simply because the partners in BN are aware that Umno's concept of Islam is moderate and accommodates those from the other faiths.

"Dr Mahathir's declaration does not entail any amendment nor additional provision to the constitution.

"His or Umno's concept of an ideal Islamic state is what you see Malaysia is today - nothing more and nothing less.

"This is unlike Pas' Islamic state which propagates a whole change in the concept of multi-racial co-existence and will require changes to the existing social contract between the different faiths as provided for under the Federal and state constitutions."

With that, another question that needs to be asked is, why is it that Pas "hates" Umno and the non-Muslim partners in BN which had shown their preparedness to support a moderate concept of an Islamic state and yet is prepared to work with the DAP which opposes both Pas' or Umno's Islamic state?

"It does not make sense. Pas leaders are so bent in doing Umno in when the latter had never opposed its pursuit of Islamic values, yet it is ready to work with the DAP.

"Surely, the DAP is a greater enemy to Pas' Islamic state concept than Umno, MCA and Gerakan," said a political observer.

If Pas is honest enough, it will admit that its main enemy in pursuing the Islamic state concept is the DAP, added the observer.

"By the same token, if the DAP is honest enough, it will admit that Pas is its greater enemy as it is capable of changing the whole political and social landscape of the nation if it gets into power," he argued.

However, what is happening shows otherwise.

Pas continues to mount an attack on BN while trying to play footsie with the DAP.

The DAP continues to pursue "No to 929" and attacks Umno and its partners in the BN while not taking the issue to Kelantan and Terengganu where the act of changing Malaysia from a moderate Islamic nation into a more hardline Islamic state is being pursued by Pas relentlessly.

The reactions to this are also predictable - both the DAP and Pas are opposed to Umno and BN because of their excesses in managing the nation.

Their grouses are not necessarily without basis all the time.

But that does not take away the fact of their ideological grounding which are the real reasons why certain segments of society are their members or sympathetic to their cause.

Yet, ignoring the fact that they do not seem to be concerned with their ideology when it comes to co-operating or distinguishing which is the true enemy to their *raison d'etre*.

These two political parties are unlike the members in the BN which have mostly adopted a pragmatic approach to their pursuits.

"That gives them quite a big room to carry out their political pursuits, especially when they are working in the confines of a multi-racial co-existence.

"Hence, the reason why the BN had always been promoting consensus, compromise and co-operation in its policy-making exercise" an analyst said.

"It does not make the BN as exciting as ideological-based political parties. But it helps it solve problems easier as it is not burdened with the fear of going against its ideology which can cause a shift in public opinion towards it."

With that, the citizenry is left without much of a choice other than probably just to try and make the Opposition have a bigger voice in Parliament without viewing it as an alternative to the BN in terms of ruling the nation.

Even then, Pas and the DAP will be telling the same old story over and over again.

They will probably stop when the old record finally cracks.

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