

Is the government preparing for early polls?
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I refer to the letter by Khoo Kay Peng entitled Machap – same lame and stale contest.

I wish to point out that while I agree with most of his points since they are almost like clichés, I also sense a new movement working towards a change from the present racially-based politics to one based on universal values of equality, justice and democracy. Of course, it is foolish of me to try to take on the opinion of a political analyst but just bear with me.

In fact, I am regularly having breakfast and long discussions with a retired teacher and a retired civil servant. Both are life members of MCA while I am a supporter of the opposition, at this moment, simply because I cannot stand the blatant corruption, mismanagement and arrogant behaviour of the Barisan Nasional. In my own way, I am trying to convince them that we can effect change gradually.

Generally, one can assume Umno will not give up its leadership role when it is enjoying supreme power and wealth, while the MCA and MIC will not give up their cosy relationship with Umno - though with relatively no power - since they are also in positions of power and wealth. It is up to the people to show BN that if they cannot deliver on a good clean government, then there is a need for change.

DAP, despite its Bangsa Malaysia stance, seems unable to get out of its reactionary role in championing the rights of the minorities against an increasingly domineering Umno. An irritating commentator in Lim Kit Siang's blogsite keeps harping on the fact that the DAP has not championed any Malay rights, which is why it cannot attract Malay members.

Well, off-hand, I can think of Lim Guan Eng's incarceration because of a Malay girl's problem. DAP is already kept busy by its overzealous championing of Malay rights encroaching on others. Will it not be a waste, if not an over-duplication of efforts, if they were to champion Malay rights as well? Anyway, the reason why it cannot attract the Malays is mainly because it has to react against Umno and its racially discriminatory policies. Besides, it needs very strong moral courage for any Malay to join a party that is unfriendly to the party favouring them.

We now have Anwar Ibrahim who is courageous enough to state categorically that the NEP should be changed to a policy that helps all poor people irrespective of race. I do not expect anyone with the genuine interest of the people at heart to object to this, except those with vested interests in mega-projects and mega-profitereering at the expense of the people.

Just imagine the billions that could be saved from an efficient allocation of our scarce financial resources to finance development projects while uplifting the standard of living of a majority of the people.

In Malaysia, a Malay's stand against the present unfair policies is certainly worth much more than any statement by say, DAP leaders. Malaysiakini columnist Dr Azly

Rahman has suggested that those of other races born in Malaysia should actually be called 'new bumiputeras'. Even PAS has leaders like Husam Musa and Salahuddin Ayub who are progressive and can impress even non-Malays who have prejudices against their Islamic objectives in administration.

Though opposition leaders and government critics are not united in presenting a credible alternative government, they have one thing in common - they are against blatant corruption and unfair practices using race as an excuse. Now, even the Malays realise that the majority of the people are getting a bad deal from the NEP.

I am all for better pay for policemen, civil servants, teachers, doctors and so on, who have been unfairly treated with a comparatively unrealistic low pay and perks which often even deny them dignity and self-respect. It is amazing how those at the top end of society can enjoy their Porsches, Ferraris and Mercedes-Benzes when others cannot make ends meet.

I empathise with the poor parents at shopping centres trying so hard to prevent the children from insisting on buying goods which they can ill-afford, and the hardcore poor still living in primitive conditions.

Just take away the race factor and we can envisage a united, just and caring society. For a journey of a thousand steps, we need to take the first step. I just read that all we need is the car's headlights to shine some 200 metres and we can find our way to travel 500 kilometres at night.

If Pak Lah cannot effect change from within Umno, perhaps Anwar can be the catalyst to effect the necessary changes from without. It is the growing Malay opposition in PAS and PKR which will make the difference against the present government.

The Internet has effectively cut through the hype and hypocrisy of the government via the mainstream media. Though the number of its users is still not sufficient to make the necessary impact, it is growing. I was encouraged when my son (who came back for holiday) made it a point to register as a voter and this through peer pressure rather than being told.

As Gandhi once said, it is important to do the right thing even though we may not live to see the changes in our lifetime. I hope Machap will be the first step where the voters will show BN that we need a drastic change in our political system.

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