

PSM welcomes 3rd force to 'kick BN out'
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The so-called 'third force', that is the Malaysian Civil Liberties Movement (MCLM) and its impact on the coming 13th general election, was a hot topic during the Parti Socialis Malaysia's fundraising dinner in Penang last night.

penang psm dinner 181210 NasirPSM chairperson Mohd Nasir Mohd Hashim (right) welcomed the force as a movement that could help the opposition, rather than create tension as viewed by some in Pakatan Rakyat.

However, "kick BN out of the federal government", he added, should remain the main focus of the opposition in the coming election, highly speculated to be held early next year.

Mohd Nasir said that the trio - Pakatan, PSM and the third force - should strategise to unite and cooperate but still remain open to views and criticisms from the public.

"PSM is looking forward to more cooperation within the Opposition...no matter who stands for election, we must emphasise people's power so that there would be proper check and balances," he said.

"If Pakatan is not doing right, we question them. If BN is doing wrong, we question them also. If we (PSM) are not on the right track, we question that as well," said the Kota Damansara assemblyperson.

MCLM, labelled by some as the 'third force', was launched a few months ago in London, and the drivers behind the movement include popular blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin and lawyer Haris Ibrahim.

Haris, the MCLM chairperson, has since disclaimed any notion that the movement was a political party, neither was it meant to be the third force to steal votes away from the opposition.

penang psm dinner 181210 01Prime Minister Najib Razak, meanwhile, has expressed his openness to the force joining the BN. However, Pakatan has viewed it suspiciously, saying it was 'neither third nor force'.

Meanwhile, the PSM fundraising dinner, a first for the party in Penang, was attended by about 300 people.

Other top party brass present at last night's event were secretary general S Arutchelvan, and central committee member Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj.

'Effective check and balances'

penang psm dinner 181210 jeyakumar devarajDuring his speech, Jeyakumar agreed that the third force can provide check and balances to stem 'feudal and pro-corporate elements' from seeping into the Pakatan.

He said civil society needed a platform for their views. But the burning issue still remains, the need for voters to "bury the BN".

"Therefore, it is important that we continue to support the Pakatan, and hope that there would be cooperation between it and the third force," he said.

"For example, PSM has not joined Pakatan but has an understanding with it," he added.

However, in recent by-elections, especially in Galas, Jeyakumar noted that the Malays have to some extent retreated from lending support to the Pakatan.

penang psm dinner 181210 02"People tend to believe in (Perkasa president) Ibrahim Ali who warns that the Malays would lose their special rights – subsidies and scholarships - if Pakatan comes to power," he said.

"The truth is, if we can prevent corruption – Malays, Chinese and Indians are equally guilty of this – we can have better benefits for the minority," he added.

Jeyakumar then sounded the warning note that if the opposition coalition did not get this message across, Pakatan is bound to do worse in the next polls.

'People force' more important

Still on the topic of the third force, Arutchelvan said the only force in the country is people's power.

Reiterating the need for the opposition to maintain focus on getting rid of the BN, he gave the assurance that PSM will continue its struggle with Pakatan and with other progressive forces like the NGOs.

Commending the PSM for not resorting to racial and religious issues to win popularity, Arutchelvan said "the struggle against capitalism" was enough to keep the party busy.

"Our problems will change if there is a change in the capitalist system," he said.

penang psm dinner 181210 toh kin woonThe Lim Lian Geok or LLG Cultural Development Centre chairperson, Toh Kin Woon, urged the PSM to target Penang workers as many were working in oppressive conditions, with low wages and poor quality of life.

"These workers want an alternative and they need a party that can protect their rights," said Toh, a former Gerakan assemblyperson before quitting the party in 2007.

"There are 200,000 workers in Penang in the manufacturing sector...these workers want a party that is concerned about their problems...they can become the vanguard of the party," he added.