

Poser over Indian void in Pakatan confab banners

MalaysiaKini.com

January 15, 2012

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The third Pakatan Rakyat convention that was held in Alor Setar on Saturday was considered a rousing success by the coalition's boosters but discerning eyes found a blemish that though seemingly trivial could be read in some quarters as portentous.

This was the absence of an Indian Malaysian leader in the pictorial montage emblazoned on banners strung along the route leading to the venue of the confab.

Karpal Singh at Pakatan convention KedahThe banners were invariably emblazoned with the pictures of Anwar Ibrahim, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Abdul Hadi Awang, Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng, but not of Karpal Singh or anyone else from the Indian Malaysian leadership cohort of the fledgling coalition.

"A coalition whose grand theme is an inclusiveness that stands in stark contrast to the exclusivity of Umno-BN neglected to include an Indian Malaysian leader in its publicity banners," commented a high-ranking leader in one of the three partners of Pakatan who asked for anonymity because of the sensitive nature of his remarks.

"I hope it was a not a Freudian slip which could well mean that Indian Malaysians are 'out of sight' and may well be 'out of mind' in a Pakatan coalition government," he added.

"This error of omission may seem a trifling one but when you place what is obviously an oversight against the context that Pakatan has just emerged from a critical juncture where its supremo was acquitted of a charge in which his lead counsel was an Indian Malaysian leader of one of the coalition's components, you'd be embarrassed to say the omission is trivial," argued the interlocutor.

He was referring to sodomy trial of Pakatan supremo Anwar Ibrahim in which he was defended by DAP chairman Karpal Singh.

Omitted pictorially but not intellectually

He said discerning Indian Malaysians who attended the gathering at the Sultan Abdul Halim sports complex in the Kedah state capital would have noticed the omission and felt the stab of chagrin.

"You must remember that politics is also a matter of perception," continued the Indian Malaysian opposition leader, "so the omission would go down poorly with a community grown sensitive to its plight as a marginalised one - as people who do not matter."

"It is an omission not likely to assuage the feelings of a community that they are only useful when you need them and dispensable when you don't," he remarked.

Lest he be seen to overemphasise the negative aspects of the omission, the Indian Malaysia politician complimented DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng for remembering, in his speech at the convention, to wish "Happy Ponggal" to Tamils on the occasion of their harvest festival which fell on Sunday, a day after the convention.

pakatan kedah mega ceramah 150112 anwar speaking 2" That was a nice touch by Guan Eng and when Anwar spoke, he dwelt on his post-acquittal trip to Bombay where he said Gandhi's grandson, Rajmohan, had long been keen to have him speak at a gathering on good governance.

"That allusion by Anwar would have gone some way in telling Indian Malaysians in the audience that they

could be omitted pictorially but not intellectually,” remarked the Indian Malaysian leader.

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