

Best for Pakatan to co-opt rather than ban factions

MalaysiaKini.com

May 11, 2013

By Terence Netto

COMMENT Factions are endemic to the politics of democratic parties. A survey of party politics in the democratic world would confirm this to be true.

Even in nations facing grave peril to their national security, there are factions within parties that are in contention with rival parties for the right to rule their imperiled polities.

Hence wise is the leadership of democratic parties that seeks to co-opt factions rather than ostracise or ban them.

"Come, come, let us reason together" would be a more constructive guide in the placation of party factions than a hortatory "You are out of order, so put up or shut up."

NONEThe best way to tackle the latest irruption of factional politics in PKR is to allow deputy president Azmin Ali's side a full airing of their grievances against the top leadership of the party and against the style and content of Khalid Ibrahim's stewardship as Selangor menteri besar.

In fact, if it's true that there was no consultation within Selangor PKR in the prior commendation of an MB to the palace, it's best to admit the fault and assure the aggrieved that there would not be a repetition in the future.

Rather than ignore the fault, or worse, deny that there was one, this admission would help douse the embers of inter-factional strife and reduce the chances of their being fanned to a renewed blaze in another irruption sometime down the road.

Astute acceptance of the inevitability of factions affords wisdom in how to co-opt, cajole and divert them such that their periodic and inevitable irruption in a democratic party does not capsize but is contained by them, rather.

Bloodless coup in Kelantan

Witness how Kelantan PAS has neatly done in Husam Musa, the star performer in the state executive council for at least half of the 23-year reign of just-retired Menteri Besar Nik Aziz Nik Mat.

The faction jealous of Husam's position - jealousy is ineradicable in democratic political party affairs - could not discharge their rancour while his patron, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, was around.

NONEThe Tok Guru was too charismatic for the envious to do anything about Husam (left) who was head and shoulders - intellectually and morally - above the rest of the state executive council.

They bided their time, waited until Nik Aziz helped Kelantan PAS win their sixth successive general election before he called it a day, the latter thereby implicitly refuting criticism that he would hold on to power forever.

Nik Aziz held on for such a long time (22 years and six-and-a-half-months) because only a leader of his aura was able to keep Umno at bay.

Depend upon it that if new MB Ahmad Yaakob cannot find another Husam to refresh and rejuvenate the administration and policies of PAS in Kelantan, Umno will be back in power in the state at GE14.

And why not?

In a democracy, no party should be allowed to rule uninterruptedly for anything as long as a quarter of a century, as Kelantan PAS would have when it completes its current sixth term at the helm in Kota Baru.

It is in the nature of a democracy to refresh and replenish its leadership and the ideas that animate it periodically. Over-extended rule by one party is a negation of the democratic process.

The way the faction in Kelantan PAS that's now in power did in Husam is a classic example of a bloodless coup.

They dispensed with the courtesy of informing him of a meeting - that's one hell-of-a-feat of cooperation or, as one might say, complicity - to appoint the members of a new state executive council under a new MB, and confronted Husam with a fait accompli of a new set-up without a role for him and then implied that it was the palace that did not want him.

Meanwhile, the palace is keeping its counsel on the matter while Husam has discounted the story of palace interference as inherently incredible.

A display of ingratitude

One can say that the way the victorious faction in Kelantan PAS has behaved towards Husam, to whom the party owes so much, is a finessed display of ingratitude.

But then wasn't it the Greek philosophic writer, Plutarch, who observed that ingratitude towards their great leaders is a mark of strong peoples?

NONEThe Kelantanese are an extraordinary people; just their production of people like Nik Aziz (right) and Husam is enough to prove the point - that, together with their people's tendency to cock a snook against the federal government, makes them a remarkable people.

The past 23 years they have constituted a faction against the federal government and in the past few days, a certain faction within that overall one has pulled off a putsch against one of their better products.

One is almost tempted to say that factions are the lifeblood of democratic politics; let's have more of them.

But no, that would not be wise or true. It's merely that factions are inevitable and if some conduct themselves with as much panache as the one that blindsided Husam, well what can you say!

As for Husam, one of the bright lights of the Malaysian political scene the last 15 years at least, the man has been far too intelligent a politician not to go with the drift of things, and not to bow and accept the end of a season.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/229828>