

BN mindset has to change

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COMMENT It is now 111 days since the new BN government came to power on the back of a transformation and "promises made will be fulfilled" platform. 111days is time enough to get some foretaste of what is to come and to make some preliminary comments.

Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia's memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the association and BN prior to the GE lays out a clear and detailed plan towards the socio-economic advancement of the Indian community.

The plan has as its basis a clear transformation agenda. It is also a signed promise on the part of BN to Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia and to the Indian community at large that the ruling coalition will carry out such a plan if it comes back into power in the 13th GE.

The association decided to back the ruling coalition only because of this binding promise in spite of the severe criticism it came under at the time of the elections.

hindraf 5th anniversary 251112 waythamoorthy waytha moorthyPersatuan Hindraf Malaysia chose this path because of the significant opportunity that the plan embodied to change the destiny of the Indian poor and marginalized.

The appointment of Waythamoorthy (left) as a deputy minister with the charter to implement the BN-Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia Agreement was and is an experiment at how grafting an entity that has a very different world view and which been extremely critical and vocal to say the least, of the administration may work to address the grievances at the base.

An experiment in progress

We call it an experiment because nothing of the sort has ever been tried before - involving a radical NGO in government in a ministerial role without going through the processes of election, a dedicated and empowered government unit to address the socio-economic woes in a focused and targeted manner of one segment of Malaysian society.

In any agreement time is of the essence. In any implementation plan resources are primary. In socio-economic development plans the development concepts and

methods are critical. Recognition of these factors demonstrate the commitment to the spirit of the plan.

The agreement is fairly explicit. Yet, to materialise the agreement there are specifics to be considered and negotiated.

NONThe specifics are about the development approach, about the infrastructure needed and about the budgets needed.

There are many items within each of these and time is running. What we are, however, experiencing is unseemly delays in deciding on even the most basic specifics of the Agreement.

Maybe these delays are unavoidable or maybe these delays are a cover for a loss of political will, post elections, we do not yet clearly know - it is still early days but the fact of these delays is noteworthy, in spite of various and several attempts by us to move matters forward.

Inherent dangers in high expectations

If it is not intended delay, but it is just the way that the wheels of the government grind, it is time for the BN government to anyway know that the entire Indian community is waiting with bated breath on the outcome of this agreement.

The more time that passes without any tangible movement on the agreement, the more the naysayers will take over the narrative.

Delayed action will not be able to recoup a position gone too far. The expectation of the Indian community is very high after the high pitched election campaign to the Indian electorate based on the promises in the agreement.

If, however, there is a scheme to subtly delay and to eventually frustrate the attempt at realising the objectives of the Agreement the backlash from the Indian community will be so complete that the Indian vote will be entirely lost to the BN in not just in the next elections but I think for many many more elections to come and Hindraf will not be just a bystander in this scenario.

The awareness and sensitivity of the community has been raised since the Hindraf rally of 2007. Just talk to any Indian man or woman in the street.

One of the clear factors that quelled a complete loss of the Indian vote in the last GE was the hopes raised by this Agreement.

Any failure to realise this agreement now, will be the last straw that will break the camel's back. The Indian votes will permanently and completely swing away from BN and nothing will be able to stop it. The opposition will have a field day with such an outcome.

However, here right in front of BN's nose is a significant opportunity for transformation in one of its key and problematic segments while also working to serve their future electoral interests.

What Najib has to do now is to get on with giving what Waythamoorthy needs so he can get cracking.

Any uncertainty about grafting Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia into government and about integrating the agreement into the workings of the government have to be resolved with no more delays and Waythamoorthy should be allowed to proceed with full executive authority, infrastructure and resources to carry out the his tasks without any further delay.

Depending on old ways of bribing the people at election time or depending on dead horses like the MIC for the Indian vote is not the answer anymore.

The political awareness of the people and the contours of the political landscape are far more advanced.

The BN has to recognize this truth and appropriately adjust its mind-set now, if it really wants to continue in power at the next GE and beyond.

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