

A tale of two Pakatan menteris besar

MalaysiaKini.com

Aug 9, 2014

COMMENT When the political history of Malaysia for this period is written I am sure that special attention will be given to the role of two state political chiefs – the Menteri Besar of Selangor, Khalid Ibrahim and his Pakatan counterpart in Perak, Nizar Jamaludin and their role in handling the political crisis that emerged during their tenure.

Firstly it should be noted that both menteris besar helped make political history in that they and their Pakatan Rakyat colleagues captured power in the two prized states from the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition.

Secondly, much was expected of them in not only providing leadership that would be a change from the corrupt and anaemic state governments that preceded them but also in helping the coalition government of Pakatan become a serious contender for national power.

Today, we are seeing the impact of these two political leaders on the development of their states as well as on the Pakatan coalition.

Nizar, as is well known, had to go through a baptism of fire in which the menteri besarship was stolen from him with the cross over of three of the elected Pakatan assemblypersons to the Barisan side.

During his brief stint in office, Nizar provided Perakians with a rare quality of leadership. Honest, fearless and non-racial, he led the way in introducing far reaching reforms to the state.

These included the conversion of leasehold land to freehold titles at an 80 percent discount of premiums for all new and planned villages, the distribution of 1,000ha of land to the state's nine Chinese Independent schools, free water (for the first 20 cubic metres), an allocation of RM40.9 million for allowances to religious supervisors and teachers, an allocation of land plots for the Orang Asli and others.

Normal political shenanigans shunned

What remains imprinted in the memory of Perakians was also the way he dealt with the prolonged political crisis between late 2008 and early 2009.

He could have feathered his own nest by doing a quiet deal with the Barisan or by crossing over to the Barisan side.

Or he could have looked around for scapegoats to explain the loss of power including pointing the finger of blame at those in the DAP or PKR.

To his credit, he never did so. What he did instead was to hold Pakatan in the state together and to show to Perakians as well as Malaysians that PAS leaders such as himself were committed to the coalition's reformist and common policy framework- even to the extent of his being accused of anti-monarchy and anti-Malay.

In the process of doing so, we can see that Nizar consistently placing the well being and higher interest of the coalition above all else, including his own party's and his own individual self interest.

It is not an exaggeration to say that PAS's image as a moderate Muslim party and its appeal to voters across racial and religious lines is largely because of leaders such as Nizar, Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Khalid Samad and a few other liberal individuals in the party.

Without them, PAS is doomed as a force in the coming elections as it is regarded as a conservative and even backward party by urbanites, non-Malays and younger voters.

Although Pakatan failed to win power in Perak state during the last elections, the coalition, led by Nizar, is in good shape to succeed in the next elections.

Nizar, Perak PKR's political glue

The solidarity of the three parties remains intact. Nizar remains as a highly regarded leader whose honesty and integrity are unimpeachable. He is the glue that will help ensure that Perak returns to the Pakatan coalition.

Contrast this situation with what is happening in Selangor where the Pakatan coalition which has a large majority in the state assembly is in a shambles.

In the richest and most developed state in the country, with such a healthy majority and with so many of the state voters supporting the Pakatan coalition, Khalid Ibrahim is single handedly doing what Umno, MCA, MIC and Gerakan have not been able to do - which is to bring down Pakatan's position in the state and even nationally.

Furthermore, Khalid is now being seen as the trojan horse introduced to destroy the unity and solidarity of Pas, and indirectly that of Pakatan, by his attempt to get the support of Pas leaders to ensure he remains in power.

And for what? One of his strongest supporters in the Internet media has written that Khalid is hanging on to his position because "his principles are founded strongly in the belief that good governance is about setting up institutions and political culture that not only outlasts individuals, but by definition, curb the ability of individuals to abuse the system."

Nonsense. The charges and criticisms against his leadership are exactly the opposite of

these so-called Khalid principles. In brief, his main political sins are reported to be the following:

Doing a secretive deal with the BN government on Langat 2 water after years of fighting to delay the project;

Favouring the Umno-linked Puncak group in the water companies buyout after years of accusing them of greed, mismanagement and default;

Giving state approval for the controversial Kidex tollway project;

Weak handling of the confiscated Bibles issue; and,

Giving sweetheart deal to Danny Tan's Tropicana (formerly Dijaya) Corp.

Furthermore, Khalid is widely rumoured to have benefitted from a sweetheart deal with Bank Islam and that the person behind the settlement of his RM66.67 million debt with Bank Islam is a former Umno lawyer.

The expression "If it looks like a rat, smells like a rat, and acts like a rat, it's a rat" applies to the charges levelled against Khalid.

The only way in which he can convince the public that there is no truth at all to the allegations is to come clean and not to challenge his accusers to file a complaint with the MACC.

As noted by a commentator, "please go through each allegation and explain it to [the] public. Not because you have to (legally, you don't) but because keeping your name clean is a moral obligation to us, the voters".

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/271080>