

## **LETTER | A Deepavali message of hope for Malaysia**

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**Kasthuri Patto**

LETTER | In two days, ethnic Indians in Malaysia and all over the world will celebrate the festival of lights, the triumph of good over evil, and the conquest of light over darkness.

And this year, Malaysians will welcome this celebration amid the buzz in the air on political party campaigns leading to what many say is the mother of all general elections, the 15th GE.

Come what may, it is also a time for the revival of old traditions, beliefs, and cultures to resurface surrounded by delicious food, laughter, all the colours of the rainbow, and joyous music and songs in the air.

While we look forward to reunions among family members and friends, the looming general election is a sound reminder of the power within the hands of Malaysians, at home and abroad, to elect a government by the people, of the people, and for the people.

15 elections have come and gone and have the lives of Malaysian Indians truly transformed and changed for the better?

Pledges have been made for six decades by BN but did it bring true reform in the country and change the lives of the rakyat?

22 months under Pakatan Harapan saw institutional reforms and such but real change happens when lives are touched.

Recently, we have passed two important legislations in Parliament – the Anti Sexual Harassment Act and amendments to the Penal Code to criminalise stalking to protect women and men from being victims of harassment and stalking.

The i-Suri scheme initiated by Harapan is cemented today as the Social Security Scheme for housewives, a safety net for housewives in the country which had never been done.

A 'zero-reject' policy was also put in place by the Ministry of Education so no child would be rejected from attending school in line with the fundamental right to education.

**Women and Indian issues**

Penang, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan (and Malacca before the change of government) had supported women from all walks of life, including women in home-based industries through state agencies such as the Penang Women Development Corporation, Institut Wanita Berdaya in Selangor, and Power House Wanita Gemilang in Negeri Sembilan.

Today we have the Sidang Wanita programme which identifies leadership abilities among women and grooms them to be future leaders in the country. This is to achieve a minimum 30 percent quota of women in politics and decision-making levels.

MPs from Harapan submitted the issue of the misappropriation of Mitra funds to be investigated by the Public Accounts Committee and I submitted a question on the Maika Holdings investigations but Parliament was dissolved on Oct 10 and brought our work to a standstill.

Many Malaysian Indian Blueprints have come and gone and, to date, one is in place, but how can Malaysians be sure that its contents are implemented?

What is needed is an independent select committee in Parliament that, like the Public Accounts Committee, has the power and authority to summon ministers, heads of departments, and government agencies for scrutiny and check and

balance.

A long-term plan, a solution, and an oversight mechanism to ensure that pledges of change and reform materialise.

Today, there are 11 Parliamentary Special Select Committees that have been working to investigate, inquire, audit, and monitor government expenditure, policies, and programmes and it was something that Harapan succeeded in – parliamentary reform.

And that is where the voices and concerns of the people are raised with answers to questions.

Harapan has proven that in 22 months, so much can be done – with political will and the real desire to see change.

Yes, there were many things that we aspired to do but our stay at Putrajaya was short-lived as a result of betrayals and political chess play.

But we must be hopeful that Harapan will be the government that all Malaysians deserve, and that hope must be transformed into votes on Nov 19, 2022.

Above all, in this election, it is crucial for every Malaysian to come out in full force to send a message that we deserve the government that we want – that upholds the interest of all communities in Malaysia, without fear or favour.

Let those hands that light the kuthuvilakku be the hands that bring a much-needed change of leadership in the country and in the lives of every single Malaysian to steer Malaysia to be the best version of herself.

Wishing all Indians and all Malaysians a courageous, hopeful, and joyous Deepavali celebration! May good triumph over evil in all our lives!

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