Unspoken discrimination towards silent bumiputeras
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Petronas Staff

I refer to the countless of letters in malaysiakini recently condemning discriminatory policies by bumiputera-controlled GLCs. We have been seeing emotional and irrational letters from readers calling for a widespread boycott of bumi-controlled GLCs, such as Petronas. One writer that called for a non-bumis boycott of Petronas gas stations must have some rusted metal stuck in his brain.

Does the writer even has a tiny cognisance of the faithful Chinese and Indians in both the lower and upper level managements of Petronas who work passionately and selflessly in the pursuit of returning the energy received from Mother Earth back to each and every Malaysian? Has the writer ever sought any clarification from any Petronas officials on the blatant assumption that Petronas service stations are 100 percent monopolised by bumiputeras?

Referring to the letter from Malaysian Truly Asian, the most obscene double standard is that all of the influential opinion leaders, both in the mainstream and alternative media, from the non-bumiputera community are discouraging more bumiputeras from standing up and speaking up for a just Malaysia. These people quickly brush off allegations of discriminatory practices by non-bumiputera controlled companies as if these injustices were 'justifiable' retaliation for the NEP's 'discrimination' towards the non-bumiputeras.

I have heard a story of an ambitious bumiputera entrepreneur who can't survive in KL's most popular IT retail plaza due to his suppliers' price discrimination and price fixing and artificial barriers to entry. Or of a competent, highly respected professor of a very specialised field, groomed in one of the highest learning institutions in the US, whose prospective employment with private colleges was made arduous and even impossible because he is Malay and the leading interviewers were Chinese. Or of a hard-working Malay stockist of a large, long-established direct marketing company whose waitlisted, high-demanded items were diverted to the Chinese stockists without any concrete reasons.

One does not have to be an economist to acknowledge that companies in the private sector, big or small, tend to employ people of a certain race with an undisclosed quota. The GLCs ultimately score better when compared to the non-GLCs in that they nearly have a work force that reflects the racial composition of the country at the macro and micro level.

Almost all of the employment ads that I have seen in a popular Johor Baru shopping complex explicitly seek Chinese-only candidates (with some of the ads appearing only in Chinese) when most of the customers do not speak Chinese (or even appear Chinese). The products have nothing to do with the Chinese culture and such ads freely appear in the classified advertisements section of so-called 'pluralistic' newspapers.

The voices of the discriminated bumis are unheard of in both Malay-controlled and non-Malay-controlled media, with the former treating such issues as the 'little things' that the Malays have to bear in return for the secured opportunities that the NEP provides, and the latter ignoring the problems as if they were totally unheard of before the introduction of the NEP.

Cartels and unhealthy business practices, after all, existed in the colonial period and the early years of Merdeka.

It takes more than rants and slogans to institutionalise equal opportunity in its truest sense. Boycotts will only exacerbate the problem.

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