

PKR's Indian leaders should see big picture
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Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) has been dogged with all sorts of rumours about the possible mass exodus of grassroots Indian leaders who have been with the party since its inception after the birth of the 'reformasi' movement.

Most Indian leaders in PKR are those who have been very disgruntled with the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), a coalition partner with the Barisan Nasional and it is this disenchantment that has spurred them to give the new party a try in the hope that they will be able to achieve what they could not in the MIC.

Many who have left the MIC to join the PKR have, first of all, failed to realise that if ever an opposition party were to really give the current administration a run for their money, it must be one that has to be Malay-Muslim led. No other alternative is acceptable to the Malaysian political landscape.

But sadly, many Indian leaders who have left the MIC bring along with them the typical attitudes that classifies them as being very communal in thinking. This will not augur well in opposition politics in this country.

When these leaders have worked hard for the party in every other election and by-election that the PKR had taken part in since its inception, and when they are not given the due recognition, they show their communal side. They fail to realise that multi-racial politics takes time to be accepted in a country like Malaysia, where everything is racially determined.

What most progressive-thinking opposition politicians are trying to inculcate is that multi-racial politics is going to be the only way that we are going to get all the three main races in the country to work together for the betterment of all and it is the only way that communal politics (like what we have entrenched in our system now) is going to be slowly sidelined.

To achieve this, we have to put aside the differences, the thirst for positions, the patronage, the publicity-seeking and the communal thinking so that communal-based politics which rules the day now, can be challenged.

The Barisan Nasional is very afraid of multi-racial politics as it sees it as a threat to its reign if the Malays, Chinese and Indians can sit together in a multi-racial party and lead without causing discomfort to the other. The BN will stop at nothing to see that this does not become a reality. But as the nation matures and the young begin to ask questions and are not happy with the answers that they receive, communal politics will not last long.

Therefore all will not be as envisaged in the well-known slogan 'Dulu, kini dan selamanya'. The politics of the country will change but sacrifices have got to be made. The best way to begin will be to allow the Malay-Muslim opposition candidates to take on the Umno-led coalition in straight fights as most of the constituencies are Malay-majority ones.

Once a few seats have been won, multi-racial politics can take root where aspiring young politicians can go to the people to tell them that be it a Malay-Muslim, Chinese or Indian problem, it is for all to help solve it. This reformist agenda will take time but if we are steadfast, it will bear fruit.

Jumping from party to party and seeking the limelight is something which the current reformist agenda - which the PKR stands for - can do without. Indian leaders must understand the struggle. It is not the post or the fame that they should be fighting for but for the cause which will take time to establish itself with the people. If the great Mahatma Gandhi had fought for position and rewards instead of freedom for the Indian people irregardless of race, ethnicity and religion, India would not have come this far today. He could have always become the first Indian prime minister but that was not his aim.

Similarly we have a reformed former deputy prime minister who is trying to establish a formidable multi-racial platform for all Malaysians to benefit from and we have to give him a chance. If we insist on communal politics, ie, Indian this and Indian that, then MIC is the best. These leaders should go back to the MIC and be happy with the communal politics which will suit them best as they just can't see the bigger picture.

If Indian leaders want to leave the PKR to form another splinter party along communal lines like what the Indian Progressive Front (IPF) is made of, then it is their choice to do so. One does not need to emphasise what the IPF is going through now after almost two decades in the cold. Such splinter groups will not stop nor discourage the reformist agenda that PKR will push forward with - multi-racialism, a free and fair Malaysia for all.

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