

Appalled by 'no further action' against Nasir Safar
Malaysiakini.com
June 29, 2010

MCA is aghast with the reply by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Nazri Aziz in Parliament that there was insufficient evidence to prove intention on the part of Safar to incite racial ill-will, according to subsection 3(1) of the Sedition Act 1948 despite his unequivocal labeling of Chinese and Indians in Malaysia as "pendatangs" and reference to Chinese women as "prostitutes".

The reasoning that the labels referred to "economic migrants and not locally-born Chinese or Indians" is pathetically insulting to the early arrivals of our ancestors who contributed tremendously towards and growth, development and wealth of our beloved nation. This reasoning is flawed, and therefore unacceptable to public sensibilities.

But, to give Nasir Safar the benefit of the doubt, if his racist remarks were not targeted at Malaysian Chinese and Indians, is he alluding that the Chinese were fleeing China for political purposes given the political turmoil in China and India circa mid 19th to mid-20th century?

The fact remains that the Malaysian Chinese and Indians were offended by the racist spews, and it does not matter whether the labels were meant for "economic migrants" and not Malaysian Chinese and Indians.

It does become paramount that guidelines with definitive parameters are established as to what form of contents (be they verbal or publication or public policy) are tantamount to inciting racial ill-will and sedition. I fear that sensible readers would read the government's move of "no further action" as sweeping the problem under the carpet, or selective enforcement of the Sedition Act.

MCA recalls that Sin Chew journalist Tan Hoon Cheng was detained under ISA for reporting on the "pendatang" and "penumpang" slurs, but no form of punitive measures by the government were taken against Ahmad Ismail who uttered them.

Some form of government action should have been instituted against both Nasir Safar and Ahmad Said to serve as a deterrent to other Malaysians from wantonly categorising individuals irrespective of nationality or ethnicity with derogatory terms or less-than-glorified professions according to racial groups.

The failure to do so would only embolden other racist-bent Malaysians to espouse similar bigoted identification only to conveniently apologise which even then, seems half-baked after public uproar.

The world is now a global village where it is not uncommon that mankind, irrespective of country of origin would venture for economic opportunities abroad, even legally settling down in other continents for foreign direct investment or simply to earn higher salaries or to gain experience. Hence, the application of the term "economic migrants" is an insult to all individuals working overseas, away from their domicile country.

Can the "pendatang" label for "economic migrants" be similarly applied to the more than million-odd foreign workers in Malaysia (be they illegals or with legitimate work permits) from fellow Asean neighbouring countries who search for greener pastures on our Malaysian

shores arriving by the boat-loads after surviving crossing the tenuous Straits of Malacca or reaching Sabah from Mindanao? It is not surprising to find two generations of such "economic migrants" among illegals in Malaysia.

We have to be frank and acknowledge that majority of people working and living away from their homelands is due to economic pursuit, rather than political-refugee status. Thus, why come up with less-than-savoury terms in such cases?

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/135942>