

Racism - the Datuk's bizarre argument
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I refer to Malaysiakini report Kit Siang: Racial and religious slurs must stop where the senior DAP politician, concerned about the rise and frequency of racial and religious slurs in the public domain, made worse by lies and falsehoods as in the case of the sinful doctoring of a photo to show Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng participating in an Islamic rite (Lim's face was superimposed on Nazir Jamaluddin of PAS), said:

'All right-thinking Malaysians regardless of political affiliation should join hands to call and work for a return of civility, reason and rationality in public discourse and an end to any form of racial or religious slurs particularly on social media and Internet.'

Coincidentally, well-known Umno blogger 'Sakmongkol AK47', who is Mohd Ariff Sabri Haji Abdul Aziz, Pulau Manis assemblyperson from 2004 till 2008, also made the observation that racism in Malaysia is not well and truly alive, but quite extensive. However he has a different approach to Kit Siang's call for civility and an end to racial slurs.

The Datuk believed that we can't rely on 'human voluntariness to expel racism'. He wants laws to outlaw racism. I believe we already have that except it's rarely used for reasons obvious to cynical Malaysians.

But I was too hasty because Datuk means not just anti-racism laws per se but legislation to stop policies, rules, and regulations that promote racism and discrimination.

That might sound like he's advocating the removal of the NEP but I caution any premature elation because the good Datuk had written recently that 'The NEP is a symbol of Malay power. It's a symbol of Malay self respect. The NEP represents the Malay amour propre (self respect) hence when Malays demand 30% of this and that, those are symbols of Malay self respect. Take that away from a Malay- he flies off the handle.'

In fact he went on to lament: 'Today what they see is that this self respect is being denuded with wanton contempt.'

Okay, so it's unlikely he was referring to the dismantling of the NEP as PM Najib Tun Razak had earlier in his premiership proposed to do. However, I must confess I am perplexed as how anyone can claim self respect through demands for this or that instead of working for and earning it, but I will defer to him on the issue of Malay amour propre.

Datuk actually proposed that we ban all political parties that adopt race, religion or culture as their political foundations from competing in general elections. I experienced a moment of shock, an acute disbelief that this Umno man was proposing to ban Umno, MCA, MIC and PAS from general elections.

Alas, I was too hasty again. He only wants new legislation to permit political parties to participate in general elections provided their candidates reflect the proportional racial mix of this country, which translated into numbers means that the ethnicity of a party's candidates shall comprise 60% Malays, 30% Chinese and 10% Indians and others. He was of course talking about Barisan Nasional as an entity and not Umno, MCA or MIC.

If I were to give Datuk the benefit of the doubt I would say he may not be aware that his proposed law to outlaw racism is in fact not only racist itself, but represents a prescribed

percentile policy to ensuring Ketuanan Melayu. It sits comfortably well with Dr Mahathir Mohamed's fear that the non-Malays may control the political strings of Malaysia.

Additionally, Datuk also dismissed Chinese meritocracy in like manner as did Mahathir. He actually went one better where he commented acerbically on the private sector (meaning Chinese business) method of recruiting staff: 'The irony is racism in non public institutions is often disguised behind the concept of meritocracy suitability, capabilities, efficiency and so forth. Hence it's often bandied around that because of commercial dictates we want Mandarin or Cantonese speaking candidates.'

'Because the test is to look at the non-Malays who are chosen to perform the tasks which are said to require meritocratic qualifications. A Chinese is equally inept at speaking and writing in English, he is equally lazy, equally mediocre in certain areas but because the shots are made by non-Malay bosses the Chinese will get the job.'

I suppose I have to concede to his superior knowledge that Chinese business would rather employ Chinese staff who are mediocre, lazy and inept at speaking and writing English, though regarding the last item on English language proficiency, I thought Datuk was unhappy about those Chinese business being sneaky by stressing on fluency in Mandarin and Cantonese as job requirements, thus disqualifying the Malays. Apart from being confused as to what language Datuk had been referring to, I wonder what DJ Jamaluddin Ibrahim has to say about this one?

But I just wonder, mind you, just wonder whether his proposed legislation would be extended beyond political parties to say, the composition of the public service, universities staff and undergraduates, and the military (of course being mindful that it's seditious to touch on the Malay Regiment).

Never mind, lest I be accused of racism let me assure everyone I was only wondering, day dreaming aloud, so to speak.

Datuk also made a number of observations on Malays and Chinese racism. While I have no difficulty agreeing with him on some though not all of his observations, I was flabbergasted by his take on the by-now notorious school principal in Kulai who was alleged to have made racist vilifications against her students, telling the Chinese to go home to China while sneering at the Indian ones as 'dogs' leashed by their religious prayer strings.

Datuk wrote: 'When Siti Inshah Mansor abused non-Malays because of their ethnic background that is racism But what if Siti Inshah Mansor was verbally abusive because the students were vandals or were gangster-like, can she be classified as racist. Her choice of words were unfortunate but were her actions prompted by the students' different racial background.'

Was Datuk postulating that if those students, allegedly vilified by Siti Inshah, were vandals or gangsters, then she wasn't a racist? Is it alright to tell alleged vandals to go home to China? Recently we had a MCA man proposing to strip vandals of their citizenship. Maybe this action of expelling Malaysians from Malaysia by stripping them of their citizenship is in vogue? What about Malaysians who are deemed as 'dogs'?

Let us remind ourselves that Siti Inshah isn't a young immature lassie but a supposedly mature principal of a school who has been put in a position of high trust to educate her young charges with good knowledge, skills, attitudes, examples and morals. So, should we accept that a highly trusted principal was not racist in calling Indian pupils dogs and telling

Chinese pupils to go back to China?

In Datuk's bizarre argument I am reminded of the death of A Kugan in police custody, a case classified by the attorney-general as murder in January 2009, but which triggered former Home Ministers Syed Hamid to instruct us not to see criminals as heroes and police as criminals. The outrageous insinuation that Kugan, not proven guilty of any crimes, was a criminal drove Lim Kit Siang to blast the Minister, stating: 'Malaysians, like people all over the world, do not regard criminals as heroes and the police as demons.'

But for argument's sake, even if Kugan was a criminal, would that justify his death in police custody? Today we have Datuk Mohd Ariff writing: 'But what if Siti Inshah Mansor was verbally abusive because the students were vandals or were gangster-like can she be classified as racist.'

I assure Datuk that in practical terms he has been unnecessarily concerned about the future for Malays in Malaysia because the Malaysian police, military and public service are all still in Malay hands. The prime minister of Malaysia will continue to be a Malay for years to come.

If Datuk is worried about Malaysian racism per se, he should consider examining its root cause and why it has recently become far more puissant, prominent and prevalent because that would guide us to the correct solutions instead of further aggravating it or preserving its status.

In the meantime we should emulate Lim Kit Siang by calling for civility and less racist polemics especially in public discourse.

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