

**Najib: Everybody's Melayu except Chinese, Hindus**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**October 28, 2010**

Najib Razak dangled a carrot at the Umno general assembly.

Quoting Usman Awang, the prime minister recited the national laureate's poem on who are Malay - the original Melayu are the Javanese, Bugis, Banjar, Minangkabau, Acehnese, Jakun and Sakai.

Arabs and Pakistanis "*semua Melayu*" too. The mamak and Malbari have been absorbed to become Melayu, and even '*mualaf*' (converts) have Malay status, he continued.

As if the list is not exhaustive enough, Najib expanded its scope to co-opt the Kadazan, Bajau, Indian Muslim, Siamese, Melanau, Bidayuh and tens of other tribes into Malay stock.

Therefore, why should the 'Malay first' Muhyiddin Yassin bow to DAP's insistence that everyone must be Malaysian First if today almost all - with only the notable absence of Chinese and Hindus - are already Malay-ised?

He really ought to have responded to Lim Kit Siang's game of 'Chinese Last' by kicking the ball back and challenging Lim to ask Anwar Ibrahim whether the latter is 'Malaysian First or Muslim First'.

What Najib was implying is that Malays have traditionally been willing to draw into their fold individuals born of any ethnicity as long as he's Muslim - religious conversion being enticement for attaining 1Malaysian Firstness.

PAS supporters, heartened by Lim Guan Eng's heady love affair with Islam, must have had the same thought when they prayed for him to convert.

Facing illegal assembly charges

Najib told the Umno delegates in no uncertain terms that Malaysian citizenship is not fundamentally equal in nature and this inequality fitted to the reality of national interest and purpose.

Hindraf clearly saw the two classes of citizenship from the very beginning. Back then, it was Umno that demonised the movement for pointing out an inconvenient truth. Today it is DAP demonising Hindraf and for the same reason. Whereas before the last general election Barisan felt their iron grip threatened by Hindraf, currently DAP wants to neutralise Hindraf's truth-speaking which threatens its pursuit of power built on the fallacy of Firstness.

Umno's resort to the police state is blatant and on record.

On Tuesday, M Murugan (*right*) was in court facing charges of illegal assembly, damaging public property and (most paradoxically) intimidating the police. He was apprehended at the Hindraf rally. The legal prosecution of Indians who turned out in full force on Nov 25, 2007 has been a long-running saga and Murugan personally made some 30 court appearances. The rest - about 65 persons - had earlier pleaded guilty and settled their fines.

For Indians, who as low-wage earners have difficulty obtaining leave from employers,

making their way to the Jalan Duta court complex in KL (another batch in the Shah Alam court) is arduous and taxing. A few have lost their jobs due to this disruption by the authorities to their ordinary lives.

Murugan typifies the Tamil working class that gets about on a motorbike and deriving a variable income each month.

Until recently S Letchumanan was another and among the last Hindraf Nov 25 protesters with a case pending. Then two days ago, he was brought to the dock with his hands handcuffed. Yesterday, Letchumanan was fined RM800 after having spent a total of five days under police detention, both on the day of the rally itself and this week when he was served his warrant of arrest.

Murugan's hearing will resume on Nov 22. His tenacity in refusing to simply be done with it by pleading guilty is nothing short of astounding.

A police witness testified in the court that Murugan had approached the FRU water cannon truck in the vicinity of KLCC and grabbed hold of the vehicle's horizontal bar, whilst yelling "*Tangkap, tangkap, tangkap*". The policeman also said the accused's shirt was soaked through. Readers may remember the photographs of Indians drenched by the chemically-laced water.

Murugan tells me that he is determined to see his trial to its end because there must be a public airing for the acute problems confronting Indians. (On the Indian poor, see also my CPI articles 'Honey, I shrunk the Indians' and 'The Hindraf of Umno's making'.)

Hindu-Muslim axis of conflict

If Malaysians of other races and Indian elites/professionals had only deigned to acknowledge that this marginalised minority is indeed mired in a severe crisis and need help, Hindraf would have had no need to marshal the tens of thousands to the street.

Even now, if Malaysian First-ers are extending a hand to Indians to help resolve their myriad and unique-to-Indian problems, Hindraf would be quite willing to take a back seat and let a multi-racial representation stand up for this beleaguered minority. But who among the sanctimonious So-proud-to-be-Malaysian speaks for the voiceless Tamil Hindus?

Hindraf is for Hindu rights because the genesis of makkal sakthi was sparked by religious oppression, and the involvement of its chairman P Waythamoorthy (*left*) in the body-snatching tussle of Everest mountaineer M Moorthy.

The spate of temple demolitions was another catalyst for the Hindraf activism. I wrote in Kee Thuan Chye's '*March 8*' book that Hindu temples have held a central place in the hearts of the Indian community - "Worship was the balm that gave solace to their hard lives, and the authorities' insensitive handling of the demolitions only rubbed salt into the wound".

I cite the above passage because P Uthayakumar informs me that he read it in Kamunting and it struck him how so many people are unable to see this point.

I've been writing consistently for years on the religious contestation involving M Revathi, Anthony Rayappan, R Subashini, S Banggarma and others. Islam is in total control. Yet DAP chooses to strengthen the already strong instead of siding with the underdogs - the ones being kicked. Worse, DAP followers throw sticks and stones.

On the other hand, the Chinese-dominated party and its leaders pander to the Islamists.

Najib plainly stated he considers Indian Muslim as Malay, and by extension entitled to 1Malaysian1st perks. I've met many voluntary Indian converts. You can read about the involuntary Indian converts in the Human Rights Party website.

Nonetheless, despite everything, the majority of poor Tamils wish to remain Hindus.

I'd attended the Penang leg of the Hindraf roadshow in 2007. Seated beside me was an Indian man who confided that he cried when he saw how his gods were callously destroyed during the destruction of a temple.

"The community has been cheated enough," declared Waythamoorthy when I met him up in Singapore over the weekend of Oct 17. He fully appreciates how Murugan is holding fast to the spirit of makkal sakthi and not caving in to pressure.

Murugan tried to stop the water cannon truck because there is no political will to halt what is happening to the Indians.

R Seetha's (*right*) suicide last year and her silent cry appears to have failed to sear the conscience of those who persist in viciously mocking Hindraf and the grassroots work of its activists.

Murugan is educated only up to Form 3 and does not possess the ability to articulate his community's woes so that the wider audience will pay heed. He only hopes that his day in court will allow the oppressed Indians to be heard by the world because Malaysians have deliberately cultivated a selective deafness.

Though underfoot, he's defiant, unlike sad Seetha who slipped away quietly into the night. There is no other way open to the Murugans of Malaysia but perhaps going to prison for a just cause.

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