

Hindraf backs 'Third Force' proposal
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Hindraf is all for the idea of a 'third force' in Parliament, but its position on details of the set-up differs from the proponents.

The ad-hoc human rights movement was referring to mention of the so-called third force in Pakatan Rakyat coordinator Zaid Ibrahim's statement that he would quit PKR.

Hindraf's political wing, Human Rights Party (HRP), said it is ready to contest under such a force in 15 parliamentary and 38 state seats it has designated in Peninsular Malaysia as "Indian seats", where at least 30 percent of the registered voters are from the community.

The third force is "an idea whose time has come", said Hindraf chairperson P Waythamoorthy (right), whose elder brother is the leader of HRP.

Still, he worries that it may eventually be found wanting, like the opposition alliance Pakatan that Hindraf had no regret abandoning in the wake of the March 2008 political tsunami.

"We have been keenly following the interest in the third force, in Malaysia and abroad," Waythamoorthy said last night in a telephone call from London.

"We are heartened by the public debate on the possibility of a new political movement entering Parliament."

Still, Waythamoorthy is at a loss in trying to figure out what the third force actually means to those pushing for it. None of the proponents, he noted, have articulated what it would be it and the people have been left with vague generalisations.

"We would suggest that the initiative for such a force comes from Sabah and Sarawak," he said. "Let a Borneo-based national party or national coalition arise and work out the details."

Who will lead?

Waythamoorthy offered two reasons why the other half of Malaysia, across the South China Sea, should take the lead in the third force.

First, he thinks that the two Peninsular Malaysia-based national coalitions - Pakatan and the ruling BN - are more than enough to cater to the differing politics in the peninsula. Therefore, another national coalition arising in the peninsula and lacking the necessary critical mass would quickly find itself asphyxiated between Pakatan and BN.

Secondly, Sabah and Sarawak do not have a national party or national coalition and this is where a third force could come in to fill the political vacuum.

"A Borneo-based national party or national coalition would be able to give meaning to the historical and legal fact that Malaysia is a federation of three territories - Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula," he said.

"But who will take the lead in forming and leading the third force?"

Answering his own question, Waythamoorthy said Sabahan Jeffrey Kitingan should leave PKR and lead the third force.

"Jeffrey has the right political pedigree and must take a stand," he added.

"Either he's with PKR or he's out. If he's out, then the third force is the approach he should take - unless he wants to go back to Parti Bersatu Sabah and save it, like what his brother Pairin has been urging him to do."

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