

Season of continuing crisis, a national saga
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The settlement of the internal crisis plaguing the PKR has not ended with the departure of Zaid Ibrahim from the muddied waters of electoral contest.

But at least the party is heading toward the transitional stage with the changing of the guards at the deputy president's post.

The PKR party elections this round are touted to be free and open. But exactly how free and open, outsiders cannot tell.

In general it is better to assume that, like the age-old political phenomenon in Malaysia, party elections are open and free more in theory than in practice.

We still have a long way to go before we witness thorough democracy in party politics at all levels in all forms.

pkrcongress pc 271110 syed husin aliAt least the last PKR general meeting had seen the most significant changing of the guards; former deputy president, Dr Syed Husin Ali, (left) has now retired to enjoy his hard earned rest, and the exhausting position is taken over by Azmin Ali.

The competition for the post of deputy president had seen the surprising result of Zaid Ibrahim being squeezed out of the party line up, forcing him to consider setting up a new party. The challenges are daunting for him as establishing any new political party requires a combination of favourable factors that must be present together.

At the moment, I must regard with cynicism Zaid Ibrahim's grand plan of founding a new party despite his great wealth and seeming personal influence. Simply put, establishing a new party is just too much of a task for any Malaysian politician at this stage of muddied development.

The ascension of Azmin Ali to the No. 2 post also opens up a way for future leaders to be challenged at the party congress. This may be fraught with dangers since in Malaysian politics all electoral contests tend to degenerate into a free for all fight to the finish, causing great damage to the party after the contest is over.

But healthy or not, the party leaders of PKR and of all political parties for that matter simply have to experiment with their democratic way of life by emerging from all factional contests without the destructive exercise in party purging.

Steering away from race rhetoric

pkrcongress pc 271110 wan azizahOf greater interest to the voters at large is the call by PKR President Dr Wan Azizah (right) to make Malaysian politics much more multiracial and to steer all political discourse away from the traditionally race-bound rhetoric.

If this political objective can be realised, then the PKR congress would count as a great political achievement in the annals of Malaysian rhetoric.

For too many years now, political dialogue in Malaysia has been over-racialised. Everything is about the competition among the various races for ethnic dominance and for division of the goodies among the major races of the country. Surely, there must be a way of discussing politics without referring to the racial distribution of goodies.

I, like many of my fellow Malaysians, have long grown tired of politics as a zero sum game of ethnic competition. I have always considered myself as a Malaysian first and I am compelled to be a Chinese, Malay or Indian by terms of reference beyond my control.

Simply put, being a Chinese, Indian or Malay is beyond my control and why should I be penalised for factors beyond my control? In other words, I should never be punished or rewarded for being a member of any race because ethnicity is something not by choice.

The call by Dr Wan Azizah over the weekend and repeated by Anwar Ibrahim for us to discard all remnants of racial politics should serve as the beginning of new way of political debate in Malaysia.

I am vehemently opposed to people who say that Malaysian politics is inevitably ethnic in nature. The idea of ethnicity forever counts large in the national consideration of all things Malaysian. But it will take every one of us to take the first step away from the poison of racial politics.

If only this fact is etched in the minds of the PKR delegates, and the poison of ethnic politics is thereby purged in the long run, then the party congress that had just ended will have contributed enormously to the future of a grand democratic Malaysia.

The story of Zaid Ibrahim would then have become just another small story within the grand tale of the great Malaysian nation.

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