

'Anti-national': Right word, wrong coalition
Malaysiakini.com
Disember 8, 2010

COMMENT What Prime Minister Najib Razak said at the opening of the BN convention last Sunday reflects a mind of the lowest common denominator. It is not the kind of mind one expects of a prime minister.

He stooped really low in taking swipes at the two-family dominance of the DAP (Lim Kit Siang's and Karpal Singh's) and "nepotism" in PKR, forgetting that he too is the son of a former prime minister, and that Dr Mahathir Mohamad also has a son who is a deputy minister with ambitions of becoming bigger.

Instead of taking on the opposition on ideological grounds and maintaining prime ministerial decorum and dignity, he resorted to name-calling. He called Pakatan Rakyat "anti-national" and "very dangerous". He said their activities were "despicable". Some media organisations reported it as "evil".

These are cheap words that anyone can utter. If by "anti-national" and "despicable", he means that Pakatan has been "bad-mouthing" Malaysia abroad, as he says it has, it would not have been about the country but the government, which deserves to be bad-mouthed anyway. And the government deserves that for all the ills it has committed over the last three or four decades, and for leading Malaysia to the economic, social and moral morass it is in today.

Let us get one thing clear – the country and the government are separate entities. Governments come and go, the country is eternal (unless it is destroyed or fragmented). We owe our allegiance to the country, not to the government. Therefore, saying bad things about a bad government is not being anti-national.

Most important of all, voting against a bad government is not being anti-national. A bad government does not deserve loyalty. Disloyalty to the government is not disloyalty to the country; in fact, voting out a bad government is being loyal to the country.

Anti-national activities

Ironically, Najib's description of Pakatan sounded as if he was talking about BN.

After all, what could be more "dangerous" and "anti-national" than corruption, of which BN has been deep into, reportedly making billions from negotiated contracts and cronyism?

And who are the anti-nationals if not those who seek to divide the people with periodic declarations that are racist, or that question the integrity of certain races or their patriotism?

If evidence is required, here is a list of only a few BN people (there are no doubt countless

more) who have been guilty of expressing such anti-national sentiments and even got away with it – Ahmad Ismail, Noh Omar, Nasir Safar, Hishammuddin Hussein, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

If you want more, attend an Umno general assembly and you won't be disappointed.

What could be more "dangerous" and "anti-national" than messing with the minds of the young from the moment they enter primary school, indoctrinating them with racially and religiously divisive messages, and reinforcing this by subjecting some of them to Biro Tatanegara (BTN) courses before they go overseas for further education?

What about doing the same with the civil servants?

What about suppressing the mass media, and using it to spin the news in BN's favour? And using it to disseminate racial hatred and to propagate racial supremacy?

What about taking our education system to the pits, lowering the standards by lowering the passing mark, not only at SPM but in universities? Ask any university lecturer if the marks are not tampered with and they'll have plenty of stories to tell you.

What about making use of the police and other law enforcement agencies to make life hard for the opposition? Or instituting judicial persecution when it suits the government's purpose?

A dream merchant

When Najib said at the convention, "BN is a responsible coalition... The people can trust us to do not only what is right but what is in their best interests", he must have been either speaking tongue-in-cheek or spinning through his teeth.

That's what Najib is good at, really. He is at best a dream merchant. If he weren't prime minister, he might have been a salesman.

He has been trying to sell us 1Malaysia, the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) without providing us a tangible product. At least for now, they are merely dreams. And for all that he promises, they might not be fulfilled.

Now he's talking about the Political Transformation Programme (PTP) pula. And by that, he means the "historic changes" BN has recently made by creating four different types of membership. Puhlease! Who cares about that? It only serves BN's interest, not the rakyat's. Call that political transformation?

Political transformation should, among other things, involve having a large percentage of the Malaysian population choose the country's prime minister rather than 146,500 Umno delegates. Najib himself is PM not even because of this relatively small number of people. He was simply handed the position by his predecessor.

As for BN undergoing political transformation itself, the best way to make it do so is to vote it out of government so that it will know what it's like to be in the opposition – deprived of

corruption opportunities, deprived of power, deprived of the temptation to be arrogant.

With the PTP, Najib is just trying to fool us again. If he wants to talk about political transformation, he should repeal the ISA, the PPPA, the OSA, the UUCA, and restore the independence of the judiciary. And that's just for starters.

Without institutional reform, the government cannot regain credibility. In fact, the government has lost so much credibility that even charging Dr Mohd Khir Toyo with fraud – apparently timed to occur right after the BN convention – is seen by the public as an election ploy. This was the same public reaction when Dr Ling Liong Sik was charged a few months before.

Khir Toyo had been in the news for a long time over his multi-million-ringgit home, the MACC had been urged again and again to investigate him, but it is only now that the moment has become opportune to haul in the man that the people love to hate. Yet even so, the people are not convinced.

After what they've seen of other somewhat similar cases, how could they not be cynical about it? Let's see if the verdict will come before the next general election. Even if the maximum Khir Toyo can get is two years' jail and a fine.

Never-ending price hikes

But election ploy aside, the fact that a prominent Umno man is being charged with corruption speaks ill for the party, especially in these times when the cost of living is rising as prices of essential goods go up and up.

Last month, there was an increase in the price of petrol which Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said would probably be the last for the year. But only a few days ago, it was raised again. And the story was buried on page 16 of The Star with, to add insult to injury, a positive heading!

The people should feel incensed that they are paying more for their daily needs while there are politicians in the ruling coalition, including one who was once a menteri besar, alleged to be corrupt.

Not to mention the money spent on wasteful projects and on making the government look good, like the RM36 million spent on McKinsey & Co. And the hiring of the undeserving S Samy Vellu as an envoy with ministerial status.

It doesn't add up. Why are we paying to upkeep BN's image and line the pockets of its leaders? Are they the nationalists who uphold the people's interests?

So, the next time Najib wants to use a word like "anti-national", he might want to be sure he knows its true meaning and apply it to the right people. Otherwise, he might appear like a two-bit spinmeister. And that's not becoming for a prime minister – especially one who's not been duly elected.

KEE THUAN CHYE is the author of 'March 8: The Day Malaysia Woke Up', which just won 3rd prize in the Popular Readers' Choice Awards. It has also been translated into Chinese.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/150205>