

That politicians are human must not be forgotten

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Jeffrey

S Samy Vellu lost his seat in last election but is still MIC president. He now positions himself the champion of the Indian Malaysian community to redeem his image that he was their betrayer. He is taking the opposition to task over the lack of Indians in the state executive councils. 'Why only one (Indian state executive councillor?) Why are they following just BN? Is this what they promised before the elections, they have their own motives?' MCPX

And Samy, who had been critical and dismissive of Hindraf in the past, will now meet Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to lobby in the interest of 'fairness' for the release of the five Hindraf leaders held under ISA. Chances are that he would succeed.

And why not? Wasn't it the great Otto von Bismark who said, 'Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable, the art of the next best'? In politics, everything is possible because its objective is to secure power, and if that is lost, to recapture it, and in this endeavour, winning over public sentiment is everything (for the next round of voting). For this end, politicians are willing to compromise and to make an about-face turn.

Now, Pak Lah would most likely release the Hindraf leaders soon – the logic of the last election results breaking BN's 50 year record of a 2/3rds majority in parliament dictates it – but it must be seen that he is 'persuaded' to do this by the MIC president supported by Gerakan (all friends within the BN's political firmament) rather than opposition parties or the NGOs.

This is to drive home the message that the politics of 'consensus and power sharing' within BN is still, despite the recent electoral debacle, alive and kicking!

Nothing is impossible in politics. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, under whose watch the 30% Umno quota system for party elections was started, now calls for its abolition – well for so long as it would help him depose his own anointed successor. For that, he is willing to be on the same side of the fence as all his nemeses, both Anwar and Ku Li, in opposing the continuance by the present premier even if both Anwar and Ku Li had challenged Mahathir when he was president of Umno. For power, there are no permanent enemies – or friends...

Politicians will always be (well) politicians whichever side of the political fence. They play on the rakyat's sentiments hopes and emotions to get their trust and votes so as to get power to be able to wield it, ostensibly for the rakyat's well-being. But as the lessons of history amply show, it is to eventually self-aggrandise and enrich themselves and their immediate families and cronies. That is the unchanging nature of human nature, which calls to mind Lord Acton's famous quote, 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'.

There are essentially two classes of people - those who rule and the majority who are ruled and often played out and made suckers.

So that is why people have to be educated and be eternally vigilant and be prepared to fight for their rights. Meanwhile erect institutions and checks and balances to counter balance the waywardness of human nature. That is the only condition to guard against servitude and the only premise of freedom and democracy.

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