

Pakatan must say no to race-based parties
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It's high time to get rid of race-based politics but we hear of yet another new race-based party, the Miup (Malaysian Indian United Party) which also purports to be a BN supporter and BN coalition member wannabe. Is the party fighting for Indians or for positions in the government? MCPX

I'm sure R Nallakaruppan, an ex-PKR leader who fell out with Anwar, has wasted his time forming the Miup. We do not need more race-based parties. Existing race-based parties like Umno, MCA and MIC will have to change if they are to remain relevant.

Having race-based parties will inevitably result in racial politics where votes are garnered by playing on racial sentiments. Umno champions Malay rights and peddles the threatening and divisive concept of Malay Supremacy in order to get Malay votes.

MCA and MIC play on the fear sentiment that they are needed to defend minority rights against Malay hegemony. The result is suspicion, mistrust and fear among the races. Fifty years after Merdeka, racial politics has ensured that we have no racial unity or integration. In fact, the races have become more polarised than ever before.

Do the leaders of the ruling regime even care about the ugly racial polarisation they have created? Not at all. The more fear and tension among the races, the better for winning votes. Thus Malays are threatened with losing their special rights, Chinese and Indians are threatened with the Islamic bogeyman and on top of that, everybody is threatened with racial strife if BN fails to win big.

Another ill effect is that where selections are based on race, meritocracy takes a back seat. As a nation, how can we compete in the aggressive global arena with racial issues holding us back?

Fortunately, the 2008 elections showed that Malaysians have matured and have partially rejected race-based politics resulting in thumping victories for the opposition. I said partially because there are still demands for representation based on race from certain segments of the opposition parties and public alike.

We should get rid of the misplaced assumption that only representatives of the same race are able to fight for the rights of the particular race. This sort of thinking may regress us back to race-based politics where BN is adept.

However, the signs are encouraging that the political landscape has changed permanently. The rejection of racial politics will continue with the changing demography towards younger and more educated voters. Malaysians already have a taste of what they can do if they vote across race and religion.

Even if the opposition coalition falls apart due to quarrelling and bickering, there is no going back to the politics of old where race-based parties held sway and BN retained its iron grip. No, whatever happens, a new paradigm with a multi-racial slant will be found.

I would like to urge Pakatan Rakyat not to accept any race-based political party to join its

coalition so that we can put racial politics behind us once and for all. Any race-based party willing to join PR must amend their constitution to become a multi-racial party. As for Umno, MCA and MIC, reform yourselves or be prepared for a stint as the opposition.

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