

Dr M has come full circle
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Ong Kian Ming and Oon Yeoh

History has come full circle. The newspaper columnist, known as Che Det in the 1960s, writing about a situation where Malays are in danger of being 'slaves' in their own land has re-emerged as Che Det the blogger, writing and speaking of these same dangers in contemporary times.

MCPX

We are of course referring to Dr Mahathir Mohamad's recent speech in Johor as well as in a posting on his blog, where he played the Malay race card, the first time he has done so in a long while.

abdullah ahmad badawi pak lah smile and mahathir pissedThe former prime minister, remembered for his Vision 2020 'Bangsa Malaysia' speech in the early 1990s and for having the majority of non-Malays stand behind him during the Reformasi movement in the late 1990s, is once again warning Malays that they are in danger of losing their rights as non-Malays become more assertive and begin to question Malay institutions.

Why risk his reputation as a 'inclusive' former PM after many years of building his credibility and reputation among the non-Malays? We have slightly different takes on this issue, but they are not mutually exclusive.

Kian Ming thinks that Mahathir genuinely believes if Pakatan can form the next government, it will lead to the erosion of certain Malay 'institutions' most notably the New Economic Policy which Anwar has promised to abolish and replace with something that is more equitable to all races.

Oon thinks that Mahathir's latest move has more to do with political expediency than a genuine fear that Malay rights are being eroded by the new political environment. It is but the latest salvo fired by Mahathir against his successor, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Mahathir is clearly playing to the gallery and being an opportunist. The wily politician knows that currently there is anxiety amongst the Malays and thus is relying on the lowest common denominator, which is the fear amongst the Malays of losing power in their own country, so to speak.

The current scenario – ranging from Karpal Singh's attack on the royalty to the questioning of the social contract by Ungku Abdul Aziz – is fertile ground for Mahathir to raise fears among the Malay community that unless there is a change in leadership, they would lose out to the non-Malays.

In other words, this is but part of a larger strategy by Mahathir to undermine Abdullah' leadership. He is trying to paint Abdullah as a weak and ineffective leader who is not capable to unify Umno and protect Malay rights.

Oon correctly points out that there was plenty of hyperbole in his speech in Johor where he raised the specter of Malaysia becoming like Singapore where the Chinese dominate the political scene. Never mind that the Malays are the majority in this country and thus the

political landscape here can never become like that of Singapore. Mahathir is not one to let simple mathematics get in the way of an ad hominem attack.

He led the charge against sultans

We both agree that Mahathir has demonstrated a remarkable ability in espousing contradictory messages for the purposes of political expediency.

Mahathir is now saying non-Malays no longer respect Malay institutions but was it not he who led the charge against the royalty when he was PM by taking away their ability to stop constitutional amendments from taking place as well as removing prosecutorial immunity from them?

There was an event several years ago where Mahathir remarked to a Chinese crowd that he could envision a day when the PM of Malaysia could be a Chinese. Not longer after, at another event, he insisted he would never budge an inch on Malay rights.

The list of Mahathir's contradictions is a long one indeed. The big question we have is will Mahathir raise this Ketuanan Melayu issue again? Is it going to be the theme of his attacks against Abdullah?

Given his history of political expediency, we have no doubt that this is not the last we've heard of this issue, perhaps not so much as a matter of conviction but more as a means of attacking Abdullah. As such, we believe the Ketuanan Melayu issue will be used occasionally, when he's addressing certain crowds.

When addressing a bunch of professionals, he would probably accuse Abdullah of being too soft on corruption. We wouldn't be surprised if when addressing the legal fraternity Mahathir accuses Abdullah of being too slow on judicial reform. This is Mahathir for you.

So, in a sense Che Det has indeed come full circle but not completely. He's reverting back to his ultra form but only for a certain audience and this time his target is not the non-Malay community but rather his own hand-picked successor.

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