

'Leave M'sia Day alone'
Malaysiakini.com
Mar 29, 2010
Joe Fernandez

Yayasan 1Malaysia (Y1M) chairman Chandra Muzaffar's suggestion on Wed (Mar 24) that Malaysia Day, Sept 16, be replaced with National Unity Day (Hari Perpaduan Nasional) would not go down well with East Malaysians.

This isdr jeffrey kitingan the realpolitik assessment of PKR (Parti Keadilan Rakyat) vice-president Jeffrey Gapari Kitingan (left). He speaks from long years spent in raising the issue of East Malaysian rights and issues including autonomy, 20 points and the Malaysia Agreement.

"After having fought for so long and so hard to win federal government recognition for Malaysia Day, why must we suddenly throw it all away on someone's impulse?" asked Jeffrey, an ex-ISA detainee.

"National unity should begin with the politics of what brings us together as a people. It should not be used as an excuse to gloss over historical and political realities."

Malaysia Day's purpose

Malaysia Day, points out Jeffrey, is synonymous with the Malaysia Agreement which pledges the rights of Sabah and Sarawak including autonomy through the 20 Points.

"Every Malaysia Day is a once a year opportunity to assess the pros and cons on the participation of Sabah and Sarawak in the Federation of Malaysia," stressed Jeffrey.

lebanon forum 050906 chandra muzaffarHe surmises that Chandra's (right) idea of doing away with Malaysia Day altogether "under the guise of so-called national unity" implies that the rights of the people of Sabah and Sarawak under the Malaysia Agreement are somehow "an obstacle to national unity".

The bottomline is that Chandra wants to spare his "precious Umno" the embarrassment of acknowledging that Malaysia has been a bad British idea so far for Sabah and Sarawak, added Jeffrey. "Is it any wonder therefore that the late President Sukarno of Indonesia railed against Malaysia as a neo-colonialist plot against Sabah and Sarawak?"

"One has to only compare Sabah and Sarawak with both Singapore and Brunei to know that we have been taken for a ride by both the British and the Malaysians," charged Jeffrey. "Brunei stayed out from Malaysia at the 11th hour. Singapore left after two years."

Exorcising ghosts

NONEJeffrey sees Malaysia Day as something that must be retained and with good reasons. For one, he thinks that it can help to lay to rest the ghosts of history still lingering in the federation after the departure of Singapore.

First of the ghosts is whether the Malaysia partnership dissolved with the departure of Singapore and if so, whether the other three remaining partners - Sabah, Sarawak, Malaya - agreed to continue the partnership.

If in the affirmative, the next question that arises is why the definition of federation in the federal constitution refers to the constitution of the old federation of Malaya and not the successor federation of Malaysia.

Thirdly, Jeffrey queries why the IGC (Inter-Governmental Committee) comprising the federal government and the governments of Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and the United Kingdom fell into inactivity.

"The IGC was meant to be a permanent mechanism to monitor the Federal Government's compliance of the Malaysia Agreement," said Jeffrey. "In the absence of the IGC, there has been no incentive on the part of the federal government to honour the Malaysia Agreement."

"By all means have Unity Day on another day but not on Sept 16 at the expense of the people of Sabah and Sarawak," stressed Jeffrey. "Malaysia Day may mean nothing to the people of Peninsular Malaysia since the pledges there only concern the people in Malaysian Borneo."

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