

Are we going to have 'passengers' on the gravy train?

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COMMENT No other nation, civilized or otherwise, will have a debate of this nature – the backward notion that the government of a nation somehow represents only some of the people. And that anything that the government has belongs only to these same people.

1Malaysia Foundation chief Chandra Muzaffar appears whole-heartedly in agreement with the hair-brained idea that anything that belongs to the government, state and nation should be classified as the “bumiputera sector”, meaning in effect that they belong exclusively to probably only the ruling Malay elite in Peninsular Malaysia. His public comments following the just concluded Chinese Economic Congress refer.

This “novel claim” comes from not only a Hindu convert to Islam but one who was a Brahmin, the scholarly-priestly class that preached a philosophy of caste hatred akin to Naziism and apartheid, combined for several thousand years in India. It was the Brahmin squatter who, in retrospect, drove away the population of the islands of southeast Asia from their notion of Hinduism to Islam.

Now, in a remarkable recall of what his ancestors fought tooth-and-nail to defend for several thousand years, Chandra the man is once again defending something that cannot stand by any stretch of logic and the imagination.

Chandra, and newly-found bosom pal Mahathir Mohamad, are not in a minority of two Indians turned Malay. We have the decidedly “Malay-looking” Ibrahim Ali of Perkasa, Umno’s evil twin, throwing in his support for the “bumiputera sector” idea.

Ibrahim is once again demonstrating in his own unique way that there really is such a thing as being educated beyond one’s intelligence. He wants all gaming companies, which he presumes are owned by sinful non-Muslims unlike him, set aside a portion of their ghastly earnings in scholarships for non-Malay students.

This will leave the Malay government, no longer Malaysian by the thinking of the unholy trio, to focus no doubt solely on the children of the ruling elite. The poor, seen and not heard after their votes are in, can fend for themselves as they have always done.

Ibrahim has read Article 153 of the Federal Constitution upside down and warned that he will sue the government if it doesn’t dish out scholarships to all his eligible Malays. No doubt he will do this after the gaming companies take care of the non-Malay students.

The Ibrahim take on gaming companies paints a picture that only non-Muslims have no qualms over how they earn a living or do business. Perhaps Ibrahim loves the sound of his own voice and is a glutton for punishment. Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

We need a 'fatwa' on whether it’s Islamic to take government projects for oneself through nominees at several times the actual value and farm it down the line as everybody jumps on the gravy train. This is akin to stealing the people’s sweat from the public treasury. Such income cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered halal – permitted – in Islam or any religion on Earth.

Ibrahim is even going to the extent of fuming that the idea of open tenders should be

canned. No doubt the idea of open tenders is anathema to those deeply enmeshed in rent-seeking activities, a euphemism for unmitigated corruption and criminal breach of trust.

Chandra, Mahathir and Ibrahim are on the verge of running amok further with their ideas on how this country should be governed. The federal and state governments should take a stand on whether they are in agreement with the trio. If not, they should disassociate themselves from such elements in the lunatic fringe.

Continued silence could only signify consent and encourage the trio to embark on even more bizarre pronouncements in the future. This can only be calculated to further infuriate the non-Muslims, non-Malays, non-Bumiputera, the natives in Sabah and Sarawak and the Orang Asli.

If the trio thinks that their continued antics would help foster their much hoped-for Malay unity at the ballot box, they are sadly mistaken. The Malays, like anyone else in the 21st century, can think for themselves and get their politics and relationships right. An Ibrahim, Mahathir or Chandra can instigate them till thy kingdom come with self-serving statements but to no avail.

Going by Article 153 and the New Economic Policy (1970-1990), the government has no business keeping the non-Malays out of the government and government-linked sectors in the mistaken belief that these are for Umno Malays who don't forget to vote for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

It's this kind of thinking that brought out the politician in a female Malay principal in Kulai who openly derided her non-Malay pupils in recent days as "passengers" in the example of the Proton Saga which she used to represent the country.

Then, there's a principal in Kedah and his teacher, both in a state which was the site of the first Hindu Indian kingdom 2,000 years ago, who think that their Chinese students should take the next available Air Asia flight back to the grandmotherland.

It's said that 12 per cent of teachers in the country suffer from some form of mental illness. Even so, the Kulai case really takes the cake. It won't be surprising if she's speedily removed from her post and kicked upstairs.

The NEP pledged to eliminate the identification of race with economic function and place of residence. The government should lead the way by removing the barriers against non-Malays entering the civil service and not continue to point fingers at the private sector.

It's just so much nonsense to suggest a quid pro quo i.e. the government and government-linked sector will only be opened up to non-Malays if there's a response in return from the private sector. This is sheer blackmail on a stupendous scale.

Those who want to be in the private sector must speak the English language and demonstrate that they qualify on sheer merit. They must not turn out to be "passengers" coming along for a free ride.

The private sector, already under siege from globalization, can ill-afford the "gaji buta" (free wages) and "goyang kaki" (shake legs) syndrome that has crippled the government and government-linked sector.

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