

Khairy sees Perkasa as bad karma for Umno
Malaysianmirror.com
28 August 2010

COMMENT Where Khairy Jamaluddin and Ibrahim Ali are concerned, the consensus among pundits is that there's a growing dislike between the two men who have been at loggerheads for a while.

It has reached a critical point where it's now no holds barred. Recent tirades thrown back and forth by these two have generated enough copy for the media to lap up.

In his latest blast at Ibrahim Ali's controversial Perkasa, the Umno Youth chief has warned that Barisan Nasional would drive away non-Malay support if it continues to associate itself with this Malay rights group.

Khairy reportedly told news website Malaysian Insider on Friday that there's a perception now to associate Umno with Perkasa and this is "hurting" BN's bid to gain non-Malay votes.

"Perkasa is hurting us, our chances in gaining non-Malay votes. For Umno, BN to win, we cannot afford to be associated with these people. They are alienating us from a large segment of voters," he was quoted by MI as saying.

In any language, it is obvious among most observers that Khairy regards association with the rabble-raising Perkasa as bad karma for the BN and Umno, especially when election talks are rampant.

According to Khairy, it would do well for BN and Umno to immediately cut off this association with Perkasa and move on. Simple as it may sound, it will not come easy knowing that there's an underlying layer of Umno members who are known to favour Perkasa. Not to mention a certain influential former Prime Minister's association with the group as its patron.

While Khairy seems to have shed his racist-rhetoric image of the past and coming across as a rational person, the rumbustious Ibrahim continues to retaliate any discourse that does not reflect well on him with his "quick on the draw" retort – for good reason or none at all depending on which side of the fence you're on.

Lately, the Pasir Mas MP has accused the Rembau MP of many things, among which he taunted Khairy for not being able to get over the fact that he was not given a deputy minister's post in the Najib administration.

The Perkasa chief also reportedly laughed off a declaration by Khairy the other day that he would leave Umno if the majority of its members supported the Malay rights group.

Ibrahim claimed that a majority of Umno members would be "happy" if Khairy left the party. He reportedly blamed BN's dismal performance in the last general election to Khairy's father-in-law, former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

While speculation is rife of a general election that will come sooner than later, there's presently an undercurrent inside Umno, and BN as well, that all is not hunky dory because of factions vying against each other.

And, again, not to forget the ex-PM who could not leave well enough alone. He has been

vociferous lately with his take on the Malay race, the NEM, the NEP and what not, to the extent he's got on the nerves of almost everyone.

For BN, especially Umno leaders, the thought of losing Putrajaya in the next general election must be heavy on their minds if recent polemics and rhetorics uttered by some BN-Umno leaders and from ranks and files are anything to go by. It pays to read between the lines and knowing where to separate the political hubris from the sincere overtures.

Najib's latest pledge to adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy against racism and to take immediate action against the perpetrators will be welcomed by all those who wish to see the country move forward without being hampered by the debilitating effects of racism.

Already, some Umno watchers are hinting at a "closer rapport" between Najib and Khairy. According to one political observer, they appear to be on the same wave-length and Khairy would be one source of support for Najib, with him bearing in mind that others may be eyeing his job if BN fare badly in the polls.

If recent indications are anything, the two men appear to be converging in their stance on racism, with both showing signs of distancing themselves from the ultras. The problem is these elements in the party will see things differently, prodded and embolden by the ex-PM.

Against the backdrop of this perceptive change in political mood, not withstanding the upcoming Sarawak election which may or may not see Taib Mahmud contesting, don't expect the verbal fireworks to subside anytime soon.

There'll be plenty more to come, and when push comes to shove, there are bound to be some casualties.

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