

**Racism: Najib's tough talk is 'only hot air'**  
**Malaysianmirror.com**  
**28 August 2010**

COMMENT Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak denounced racism, adopted a policy of 'zero-tolerance' on racism and ordered a swift reaction against perpetrators of racial slurs. His smug remarks were cheered by the Barisan Nasional Youth Lab participants. However, most of us are unconvinced and regarded his comments with scepticism.

najib-racism True Malaysians have long dreamed of a country free of racism. After any racial flare-up, our politicians are induced to promote greater unity.

Unfortunately, their previous guarantees have come to naught. So why does Najib think we should believe him this time? Haven't we heard it all before?

A week ago a Johore school head, Siti Inshah Mansor, allegedly made racist comments about the Chinese and Indian students in her school. These comments were not made in the privacy of her office. It happened during school assembly, at a Merdeka gathering, in front of the whole school.

Our Prime Minister seems to have dragged his heels and spoke on the matter, a fortnight after this headline-grabbing news. His 'swift action' has seen its first test.

The principal made damaging allegations. This serious incident is made worse because the perpetrator made them in public, and is the school principal, i.e. an adult, who should be showing a good example and who holds a position of responsibility.

If the Prime Minister wants to be seen worthy of his words, then the swift response is to sack the principal.

Her public apology is her admission of guilt. Otherwise, why apologise? Or was her apology about a possible misunderstanding over her remarks? Lawyers may argue that an apology is not an admission of guilt.

Police reports are available and witness statements may have been recorded. But this investigation seems to be protracted.

If racism cannot be tolerated, and a swift response promised, then what is the Prime Minister doing? Has Najib's deputy, who is also the Minister of Education, a hand in the delay?

On the other hand, when does this zero-tolerance start?

Is it from Friday (Aug 27), when Najib mentioned it at the BN Youth gathering or is it from the Johore school case (incidentally, there are 2 school incidents) or two months from now? When then?

Najib should realise that by now, Malaysians are tired of the empty promises of politicians and are frustrated by the politicians' inability to come up with answers and results.

If Najib needed further reminding about racism, we could start with his Cabinet. He needs to clean up his house first. Uppermost, is his deputy, who appears to be sabotaging Najib's own 1Malaysia policy.

Najib's former aide, Nasir Safar, said that the 'Indians are beggars' and 'Chinese women are whores'. He said them at a Malaysia seminar in Malacca.

The government failed to prosecute Nasir despite several witnesses and scores of police reports alleging that Nasir had committed sedition.

However, Najib defended Nasir's remarks and told us that Nasir's apology and resignation were punishment enough for the indiscretion.

How about Ahmad Ismail of Penang Umno? He must be one of the precursors of the recent spates of racism. He also called the Chinese "pendatang" and sparked the arrest of three people under the Internal Security Act?

His punishment was a 3-year suspension from Umno which was rescinded after one year. Is that what Najib means by 'swift action' or of zero-tolerance? To date, Ahmad Ismail has not apologized for his actions.

We musn't forget the usual culprits like Ibrahim Ali, Dr. Mahathir and Ridhuan Tee Abdullah.

Racism should not be confined to people making racial slurs. It should include institutions. There are NGOs like Perkasa and printed newspapers like Utusan Malaysia. Some firebrand religious leaders are guilty too.

If Najib really wants to make a difference, he should abandon the racially motivated practices and policies in the country.

This includes education in our schools and eradicating the quota system in public universities, the selection of lecturers and teachers, jobs in the civil service including the police and armed forces, top positions in government, allocation of certain businesses, government contracts, the BTN indoctrination and more.

Right now, Najib's latest stance on racism is merely political point-scoring. Others may see this as a ploy to attract foreign investment for the benefit of international observers on racial harmony.

Najib has to be tough and not just talk tough. Failure to be stern and swift, against a small core of people, will damage economic revival, increase racial tension and undermine a whole country.

Najib belongs to the political and social elite. People of different races in this privileged hierarchy must interact well with each other. They have to, as their elevated existence probably depends on it. However, it does not mean that the majority of the rakyat enjoys the same perceived racial harmony.

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