

**Muhyiddin Yassin: What is your vision of Malaysia?**  
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COMMENT Everyone who enters high office will have heard of the saying, "With great power comes great responsibility". Thus, it is disappointing that our Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also the Education Minister, said that he was "powerless" to take action against the two school principals who allegedly uttered racist remarks recently.

Muhyiddin has been unfair to abrogate his responsibility to a civil servant, the director-general (DG) of the Public Service Department (PSD), Abu Bakar Abdullah. This case digs deep into our national identity and has exposed divisions in our perceived unity.

Muhyiddin has made an error of judgment. He holds two important portfolios in the Cabinet and cannot distance himself from the nasty implications to do with this case.

Moreover, he is sending mixed messages to the people. Does he not realize that '1Malaysia' cannot be cherry-picked at will by sections of society?

Of greater importance, he is sending the wrong signals to those students who were victims of this racist attack – the Non-Malays and at the same time, he relays another signal to the Malay students – the 'on-lookers'.

Can Muhyiddin imagine the destruction he is causing in these young minds about fairness, justice, equality, unity, loyalty and respect? These are the young who will one day shape our nation. The damage he has done is enormous. Is he morally bankrupt and devoid of a conscience?

The racist principals have exposed the fragile truce between the various races. However, the delay in punishing them is dividing the races further.

Muhyiddin confirmed on Thursday that he stood by his statement on 30 August that only the PSD had jurisdiction on disciplinary matters which concerned civil servants of a particular grade. According to him, this case was governed by that ruling.

If anyone has been having sleepless nights in the past weeks, it must be the hapless DG of the PSD. Abu Bakar has reportedly received a "six-inch thick" report from the Education Ministry to digest. He cannot be too happy that the buck has conveniently been passed to him.

The responsibility Abu Bakar shoulders is great. People who spoke against this particular racist case, have themselves been investigated by the police. Even politicians have locked horns with each other in trying to defend their own positions.

Instead of acting decisively to quell hurt feelings and to halt the deepening rift in our society, Muhyiddin's apparent decision to treat this matter lightly and delegate it to his DG of the PSD reflects badly on the DPM.

Muhyiddin is the Education Minister. He is also the Deputy Prime Minister. In matters of state, he is second in command to the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister is incapacitated in any way, it is he who will take over the running of our country.

When he says that he is powerless to act in this very serious matter, he has shown that he lacks the passion, commitment and responsibility to do his job. He has let many people down.

As for poor Abu Bakar, he cannot be relishing his monumental task. The spotlight is now on him. And he knows that whatever he decides may not please everyone.

He has seen how volatile the situation is. He knows that the insensitive and callous remarks of the principals have driven a wedge in this nation. Given a choice he would probably have liked to turn back the clock. Whatever conclusions he arrives at, and whatever decision he takes, is probably going to affect his career and his public persona.

It is clear that the nation is impatient and the people have waited too long for this case to be finalised.

When Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said that people who make racist remarks will be punished and that there is a zero tolerance to racism, it appears that the DPM was unaware of the PM's statements.

The racist outbursts of the school principals have its roots in racial politics. It is the politicians who are responsible for the slow disintegration of our nation. In championing their particular section of society, they inadvertently sowed the seeds of racism.

Why can't Muhyiddin take charge of this potentially volatile situation? Without responsibility, he is seen as selfish and only interested in his own career and goals. Why can't he rise above racial politics and show political maturity?

He knows that politicians have to make decisions that will affect many lives, including their own. So maybe he could enlighten us as to what his vision of Malaysia is.

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