

Pakatan dares BN to end race formula
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 7 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders have challenged Datuk Seri Najib Razak to abolish Barisan Nasional's (BN) race-based formula by turning the coalition into a multiracial party, saying this would resolve the quandary over maintaining Chinese representation in government.

DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua pointed out to The Malaysian Insider that it was BN's race-based system that is now causing it to gripe over MCA's decision to reject Cabinet posts if it were to fare worse in future general elections than it did in Election 2008.

If BN should turn into a multi-racial party, he said, MCA's threat would not cause any headache to the party's coalition partners, especially Umno.

"The squabble between Umno and MCA is simple ... the root cause to the dispute is the fact that the BN formula for one party to represent each race does not work for this country.

"The only way for BN to resolve this problem of marginalising a particular community in government is by transforming themselves from a race-based coalition to a multiracial one, banning all race-based parties," he said when contacted here.

Pua was responding to a statement by senior Umno minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz carried by The Malaysian Insider yesterday, in which the latter said it would be unfair to "punish" the Chinese if they chose not to vote for BN Chinese-centric parties like MCA or Gerakan.

The influential Umno leader had told The Malaysian Insider that even if MCA failed to secure a single parliamentary seat in the coming polls, they should still be given posts in the BN government to ensure that all races are well represented.

Nazri was recalling a pledge made by MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek several months ago when the former Cabinet minister said he would withdraw his party from the government if it performs worse than it did in Election 2008.

Dr Chua first mooted the idea when he urged the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) not to join the Sarawak Cabinet after it only won six of the 19 seats it contested in the April 16 state polls. He later said the MCA would do the same, using the 2008 results as its benchmark. Should MCA fail to win at least 15 parliamentary and 31 state seats, pledged Dr Chua, the party will not accept any Cabinet posts in the next government.

"This is of course, MCA's choice but the way for MCA to lead itself out of this problem is not by threatening the community by saying they will not participate in the government if they win fewer seats This is not going to increase public confidence in the party or scare the Chinese into voting for them," Pua said.

PKR vice-president Chua Tian Chang said Malaysians no longer accept BN's race-based concept and dared Najib to transform the ruling coalition to reflect the public's wishes. He

pointed to PKR as an example of a multiracial party, the largest in Malaysia at present.

"We have proven in 12 years how to be successful as a multiracial party. If Najib is really serious, he should be courageous enough to start the move. And the other component parties in BN, since they claim to be all multiracial and pluralistic, they could gang up together to force Umno to make a stand ... but no one has the courage," he said.

Chua, however, called MCA's bluff in its pledge, expressing doubt that the party would follow through with its plan to reject government posts should it suffer another poor showing in the coming polls.

He said the party should prove the sincerity of its pronouncement by first leaving BN and standing on its own for the polls.

"I do not see Dr Chua or other MCA leaders having the courage to carry out their plan of leaving the Cabinet. There is no logic in that ... after people vote for you, no matter how few, would you want to show you do not respect those who did?" he said.

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