

Racial politics hindrance to solving issues, say groups

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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 — Escalating racial politics is dampening efforts to address issues like education and poverty which should be dealt with from a “non-racial” approach, said several groups today.

Twenty-one organisations have announced the formation of a “multicultural” coalition called Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM) or Plan of Action for Malaysia (PoAM) aimed at formulating ideas and ways to tackle social issues beyond racial lines.

“This is a long overdue initiative to establish a multicultural, multiracial network of NGOs.

“There are crucial issues in the country, problems of poverty, education which cuts across race and culture... because of the political system we have it is taken up on a racial basis,” said Centre of Policy Initiatives (CPI) director Dr Lim Teck Ghee, who is on the GBM committee.

The coalition comprises different interest groups like the Kuala Lumpur-Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (KLSCAH), Aliran, Pertubuhan Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM), CPI, Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia (SABM), People’s Green Coalition (PGC), Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram).

It also includes the United Chinese School Alumni Association of Malaysia (UCSAAM), National Interlok Action Team (Niat), the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) and the Negri Sembilan Chinese Assembly Hall (NSCAH).

“Previously, different groups have been approaching things from their own perspectives. Chinese organisations have been concerned with matters that affect their own community, but with the formation of this coalition, we believe it’s time to do things differently,” said KLSCAH president Tan Yew Sing, who is also GBM co-chairman.

Aliran executive committee member Dr P. Subramaniam said the coalition is strictly non-partisan, and that it will simply offer advice and suggestions to both the ruling government and the federal opposition on ways to improve the running of the country.

GBM will be organising an event titled “From discord to harmony” on November 15 where the coalition’s charter will be launched on the same day.

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