

Idris Jala 'confused' over Malaysian-first agenda, say Pakatan reps
The Malaysian Insider
Februari 03 , 2012
By Yow Hong Chieh

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 — Datuk Seri Idris Jala's unhappiness over the Malaysian-first dilemma shows that the minister is confused about the thrust of the slogan championed by the Najib administration, opposition lawmakers said today.

DAP Youth chief Anthony Loke said the emphasis on being Malaysian first did not mean doing away with cultural roots but acknowledging that national interests should take precedence despite racial differences in the country.

Loke said 'we must put ourselves as Malaysian first'. — File pic

"I think he got confused. We are not saying that racial or cultural identities are not important...

"But when it comes to nation building, we must put ourselves as Malaysian first," he told The Malaysian Insider, saying that the DAP has always pushed for integration rather than assimilation via its "Malaysian Malaysia" concept.

Taking a different tack, PKR communications chief Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said he had "no problem" with what Idris said provided the country could focus on solving bigger issues like the reluctance to do away with race-based affirmative action.

"I'm fine to ignore that (Malaysian first) issue provided that we can solve other issues like why needs-based affirmative action is seen as problematic and why race-based parties are still seen as relevant.

"I have no issues with people who are comfortable with multiple identities. My problem is with people who condone race-based parties and race-based policies. That is the bigger issue," he said.

But the Seri Setia state assemblyman also pointed out that the inability of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's own deputy to accept the Malaysian-first concept meant that it was "a sham" perpetrated by the Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

"His deputy can't even accept it so what does 1 Malaysia mean beyond 'Salam 1 Malaysia'?" he said.

PAS central committee member Khalid Samad conceded that there was "some truth" in what Idris said but pointed out that what was good for one's race must also be good for all Malaysians.

Idris said he gets upset with people stuck with this whole Malaysian-first dilemma. He said Malaysians should not have to choose between their race and their nationality, and maintained that the two overlapping identities should not be seen as contradictory as "everything has to be brought back to the scales of justice, truth and fair play".

"What's important is for you to be in the right and not in the wrong... We must accept that we are all Malaysians and we all want what's best for the country," he stressed.

"We must think in a spirit that brings prosperity and goodness to everyone and not just your race. If that's what it means to be Malaysian first, then okay, that we can accept."

Idris, a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said on Wednesday that nationality, race and religion were equally important when determining one's true Malaysian identity and that the "Malaysian first, Malay next" dilemma should not arise.

"I get upset with people stuck with this whole Malaysian-first dilemma. Why must I be Malaysian first and Malay second?" he said when dissecting the 1 Malaysia concept during his keynote address at an intercultural dialogue.

The Sarawakian Christian minister, who acted as mediator between the religious community and the government during the Alkitab row last year, said nationality, race and religion contributed equally to a person's identity and should not be placed in a contest against one another.

"My name is Idris, that is my name, my identity. Kelabit is the tribe I was born in. I belong to a group called the Orang Ulu. I am Sarawakian, I am Malaysian, I am Asian.

"They are all individual identities that are equally as important. You cannot say one is more important than another," he had said.

The "Malaysian first, Malay next" dilemma first hit the headlines in 2010 when DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang challenged Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to declare if he placed his national identity above his race.

Muhyiddin, however, responded that he was "Malay first", a move which observers said undercut Najib's attempt to foster more unity among Malaysians through his 1 Malaysia concept.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/idris-jala-confused-over-malaysian-first-agenda-say-pakatan-reps/>