

BN can tackle ethnic issues, Pakatan disparate force, says Chandra Muzaffar
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 15 — With three weeks before Malaysia goes to the ballot box to determine what the next five years will be like, Dr Chandra Muzaffar has brought up that perennial subject of race.

The chairman of the board of trustees of Yayasan 1 Malaysia said in a statement today “the question of how the Barisan Nasional (BN) or the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will manage ethnic relations in the country in the coming years is of critical importance to the voter” in the May 5 general election.

Chandra (picture) said the country had done remarkably well “in preserving a degree of inter-ethnic harmony” over the past 55 years.

The proof of this is the fact that there has been a minimum of communal violence and only one major riot with communal overtones — May 13, 1969.

Chandra credited this to the BN government and its predecessor, the Alliance, and listed out some of these “fracases” the government has dealt with successfully: “the 1967 disturbance in Penang, the 1978 Kerling incident, and the 2001 Kampung Medan episode would be some examples.”

He said “PR has yet to be tested largely because when ethnic issues impinge upon security, they come within the purview of the federal government.”

“Its management of four state governments has not equipped PR with the skills and knowledge to negotiate the multi-ethnic terrain that is Malaysia.”

A glaring omission in this glowing report card Chandra hands BN for its handling of inter-ethnic issues is Perkasa and its founder Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

Formed right after last general election when BN lost its two-thirds majority, the non-governmental organisation’s objective is to defend the rights of the Malays which it feels is continually threatened by non-Malays in the country.

Chandra’s statement singles out “the rise of Chinese ethnocentrism at the national-level, fuelled to a large extent by the DAP” for contributing to the division of Chinese and Malay youths in Kelantan.

He said the continued differences in ideology between PAS and the DAP “will not only drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims but also polarise Muslims themselves.”

Without acknowledging the divisive and offensive stand of Perkasa, Chandra said the DAP’s “chauvinistic stances will trigger a backlash” from the Malay majority.

He cited this and PKR’s inability to reconcile the differences between the two parties as proof that PR will not be capable of bringing the various communities together in the country.

Chandra added that “DAP is increasingly becoming the conduit for strident Christian voices

that are less than sensitive to the prevailing Muslim-majority landscape.”

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