

Indian group fine with Ibrahim Ali, but say some others in Perkasa are racist
Malaysian Insider
July 27 , 2013
BY JENNIFER GOMEZ

New Indian Welfare and Charity Association (Perinbam) president U. Thamotharan insisted today he was on the same page with Perkasa's president Datuk Ibrahim Ali, but added there were a couple of individuals in the NGO "who were giving it a bad name with their racist remarks" and should be removed.

Thamotharan did not name anyone in particular, when contacted by The Malaysian Insider for comments on an incident on Friday, where Perinbam representatives were visibly upset when Perkasa deputy president Zulkifli Noordin defended the action of SK Seri Pristana headmaster Mohamad Nasir Mohd Nor, who ordered his non-Muslim pupils to have their recess break at the school's shower room.

The highlight of the day was supposed to be the formation of the Malaysian Interracial NGOs Council (Mirac), which saw Perkasa teaming up with Malaysia New Era Chinese Association (Percisma) and Perinbam.

However, Zulkifli had said at the event yesterday that Perkasa would defend the headmaster if necessary, as he has been the subject of criticism and slander from various quarters who had politicised the issue.

He had also said that Mohamad Nasir should be appreciated and not criticised.

This caused dissatisfied Perinbam members to leave the event. However, Ibrahim managed to convince Thamotharan to stay and break fast together.

Thamotharan, when contacted today, insisted that what Zulkifli said was not right, adding that the latter has made his comments merely by reading about the issue in the media.

"He did not go down to the school, and I don't think he met the headmaster, how can he pledge support for him? I'm guessing he is merely looking for publicity," he said.

Thamotharan stressed, however, that he did not have any problems with Perkasa president Ibrahim, whom he felt was getting attacked unnecessarily due to remarks made by other members in the Malay-rights group.

"We like working with Ibrahim Ali, people say he is racist, but to us he is not. It is some other individuals in the organisation that make Perkasa look racist with their comments," he added.

On the issue of the non-Muslim students made to eat in the shower room, Perinbam's stand was for stern action to be taken against the headmaster.

"We urge the government not to drag their feet in taking action against the headmaster, he must be punished. There was no reason to make the students eat there. We understand the sensitivities of Ramadhan, as such, they could have allowed the students to eat in the canteen, behind a curtain perhaps. Our people visited the school, and there were no renovations going on in the canteen," he said.

Mirac is expected to meet once a month to discuss interracial issues and ways to maintain solidarity and unity in the country.

Thamotharan also insisted that the Zulkifli incident was an isolated one and would not affect Perinbam's good ties with Perkasa.

He also rubbished talk that Perkasa was pressured into forming Mirac following a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak recently.

"That is not true, we had this plan even before the general election, but there was so much happening before and after the polls. Only now we found the time to form this alliance," Thamotharan insisted.

Asked if Mirac would be discussing the school issue, he said that they would but added that it would most possibly be after the Hari Raya holidays as Ibrahim was to leave soon to perform his umrah.

"We feel however that action must be taken immediately against the headmaster, then we can consider this matter closed," he said.

When contacted by The Malaysian Insider, Perkasa secretary general Syed Hassan Syed Ali said that they would soon commence discussions internally whether to pledge their support for Seri Pristana's headmaster.

He added that Perkasa's alliance with Perinbam was not affected by the comments made by Zulkifli yesterday in support of the school headmaster.

"There is no problem between us and Perinbam, it was just a small misunderstanding. This is normal for any alliance, eventually all will be well," Syed Hassan said.

Meanwhile, Percisma president Andy Choy Chee Wai said that Mirac was committed to promoting mutual respect among Malaysians.

On the Seri Pristana incident, he said that Percisma preferred to wait for the outcome of the investigations before making any comments.

"We have so far only obtained news from the media and public on what allegedly happened, but we have to know the actual situation before making any conclusions," he added. - July 27, 2013.

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