

Report: In New Malaysia, Some Playing Old Game Of Stoking Malay Fears

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By Admin-S

To other Malays who do not share their liberal world view, the country is fighting for its Malay identity and its Islamic soul under new management.

(FMT) – The growing angst among Malays that their rights and privileges are under threat cannot be underestimated, says Straits Times editor in opinion piece.

While a new Malaysia is emerging, some groups “want to play the same old game” of crying that Islam and the Malays are under threat, according to an opinion piece in The Straits Times.

Written by its Southeast Asia editor Reme Ahmad, the opinion piece noted that there was increasing angst over Malay Muslim rights and fear that Malays would lose the perks they were enjoying.

This concern, being used as political or religious fodder by some groups, appears to resonate with the rural Malay.

Reme said the recent appointment of three non-Muslims to the posts of de-facto law minister, the attorney-general and the chief justice by the new Pakatan Harapan government had further increased Malay concern about their rights.

He quoted PAS information chief Nasrudin Hassan as telling Sinar Harian newspaper earlier this month: “Since these three positions are held by figures who have caused restlessness among Muslims, what hope is there for the future of legal welfare for Muslims?”

Reme noted that an umbrella group of non-governmental organisations called the Muslim Defenders Movement planned to hold a demonstration on Saturday to protest against what it deemed to be efforts by the PH government to undermine the interests of the Malay Muslim majority.

“Let us come together with others from our religion to express our unhappiness towards several developments which threaten Islam and Malay rights, sons of the soil of our beloved nation,” the NGO said on its Facebook page.

“While it is easy to dismiss statements by the Muslim Defenders Movement and others espousing similar views as over-the-top rhetoric by fringe groups, their call for a protest reflects a sentiment that is being stoked by conservative Muslims and Malay nationalists upset over the two-month-old Pakatan Harapan government and its so-called ‘Malaysia Baharu’ (New Malaysia) politics.

“The potency of the message – that Islam and the Malays are under threat – should not be dismissed as so much idle coffee-shop banter, not when Umno, flexing its Malay nationalist credentials, and its Islamist ally, Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), have coalesced their attacks on this theme in recent weeks.”

With social media to aid the dissemination of such messages, he said, “what starts off as the views of specific interest groups could fast become alternative facts repeated by many people”.

Also causing concern to Muslims, he said, was talk that the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim), would have its powers clipped.

Other issues of concern to Malays, he said, included the PH government’s move to recognise the Chinese-based Unified Examination Certificate (UEC), tackling controversies related to the conversion of children to Islam in divorce and child custody cases, and enhancing English usage in schools.

He noted that in Parliament this week, Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali said the government might review two key Bumiputera policies – the New Economic Policy and New Economic Model – which guarantee Malay quotas in jobs, education, housing and government contracts.

“Put all these together and one can perhaps understand why there is angst in the Malay Muslim community over what PH intends to do during its five-year term.”

Reme pointed out that former prime minister Najib Razak had said the PH government had allowed Bahasa Malaysia to be violated, and that Islam and the Bumiputera agenda did not have a central place in their administration.

Najib said in a Facebook post in June: "I have said that Malays will 'dibangsatkan' (be treated like a bastard) in their own country if Umno loses power."

Reme said: "The arguments of opposition politicians like Mr Nasrudin of PAS or Umno MP Najib might seem overblown, ridiculous even, to the Malay urban elites who form the Bangsar crowd. But to other Malays who do not share their liberal world view, the country is fighting for its Malay identity and its Islamic soul under new management.

"PH leaders, struggling with high government debts piled up by the BN government and grappling with running a new administration, need to quickly understand that they should be more circumspect when addressing issues linked to Malay and Muslim rights."

He added that a first test of the ground sentiment might come in the by-election in Sungai Kandis where a PH candidate is facing off against an Umno leader and an independent candidate. PAS, meanwhile, has told its members to vote based on the interests of Islam and the Malays.

"Yes, there is a New Malaysia at hand. But some of the players want to play the same old game," Reme concluded.

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Sources: <http://www.malaysia-today.net/2018/07/26/report-in-new-malaysia-some-playing-old-game-of-stoking-malay-fears/>