



By Kua Kia Soong,

Director of SUARAM,

With the 13th general elections just round the corner, it is time for Malaysians to bring the big issues before the prospective candidates and their parties and to register their commitments to these demands of the Malaysian people. These issues are what the politicians should be debating and each candidate and political party should register their stand on each of these concrete demands. Most of these concrete demands can be delivered very quickly and we will be monitoring closely to see if the candidates/parties carry them out. The simple rule is:

IF THE CANDIDATE DOES NOT SUPPORT OUR DEMANDS, DON'T VOTE FOR THAT CANDIDATE!

IF A PARTY DOES NOT COMMIT TO CARRYING OUT OUR DEMANDS, DON'T VOTE FOR THAT PARTY!

The first demand is for the eradication of “institutional racism” that has been entrenched in our country ever since the May 13 Incident of 1969 led to a *fait accompli* situation for UMNO/BN to introduce the “New Economic Policy”.

Institutional racism may be defined as:

“... that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.” (A. Sivanandan, Director of the Institute of Race Relations, UK)

This seems like a concise working definition to look at the many examples of institutional racism in Malaysia that has been rampant ever since the “New Economic Policy” was put in place by the then emergent state capitalists in UMNO in 1971.

The British reneged on civil liberties

Institutional racism in Malaysia has come about through the British colonial power reneging on their post-war promises of equal rights for all Malaysians after the reaction of the Malay aristocracy to the Malayan Union proposals in 1946.

Even so, the inclusion of Article 153 on the “special position of the Malays” has been interpreted by the Umnoputras all these years in their own fashion, clean from the purpose of the original intent. Since the promulgation of the “New Economic Policy”, they have been using “Bumiputrazism” as a populist ideology to gain Malay voters’ support as well as a convenient way to accumulate their capital stake in the economy.

Article 153 abused after 1971

The 1971 amendments to Article 153, namely, (8A) on the “quota system”, have likewise been implemented by UMNO according to its whims and fancies, instead of proportionately on a faculty basis and sparingly as directed “by the Yang di-Pertuan Agung”.

The blatant racial discrimination in development policies since 1971 have been seen in projects such as the FELDA schemes, Petronas and others involving share allocations and the bestowing of privatized projects.

No non-bumis allowed in UiTM

In education policy, the proud boast by the Higher Education minister, Shafie Salleh at the UMNO General Assembly in 2004 that he would not allow a single Non-Bumiputera to enter UiTM is perhaps the most blatant admission of racial discrimination in a public sector institution. But similar racial discrimination has existed for years since 1971 in other institutions paid for by Malaysian tax payers.

Discrimination in civil & armed services

Institutional racism has existed in the civil and armed services since May 13, 1969. Thus, while there were 30% Chinese in the civil service and 40% Chinese in the RMAF in 1960; today the proportion of Chinese in the civil service has fallen to below 5% while the proportion of Chinese in the armed forces is below 2% if that!

Racist indoctrination in public institutions

The more pernicious form of institutional racism has been the racist indoctrination that has been seen or exposed in UMNO general assemblies, the Biro Tata tertib Negara, school textbooks and other institutions. In these institutions, racist ideas of “pendatang” (them) and “Ketuanan Melayu” (us) have been overtly and covertly propagated while the BN is portrayed as the defender of “Ketuanan Melayu”. The recent “Interlok” controversy is merely a latterday phenomenon that has been propagated in public institutions since 1971.

Racism against Indians

While the Chinese and Indians have been portrayed in the official propaganda as the “pendatang” (immigrants) as opposed to the bumiputras who are supposed to be “princes of the soil”, in recent years Indians have borne the brunt of official racism as can be seen in the statistics on deaths in police custody and deaths through police shootings. Indians have been marginalized through the neglect of the plantations sector and their displacement as urban settlers in recent decades.

Fascism of the far-right

The far-right in this country has been getting away with impunity. The historical blight of May 13, 1969 on the national conscience has to be cleansed through a truth and reconciliation commission. There also has to be a public inquiry into the even more recent racist murders at Kampong Medan in 2001. An Equality & Human Rights Commission should ensure that the

racist outburst that we saw by UMNO leaders in Kampung Baru in 1987, at the Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall against Suqiu in 1999, and the racist rallies such as the Malay Action Front in 2001 are prohibited and adequately dealt with.

Eradicate institutional racism

Thus, “Eradicate institutional racism” should be the first of our 13th general election demands with the following concrete demands:

- Abolish the “New Economic Policy” - corrective action in all economic and education policies must be based on need or sector or class and not on race with priority given to indigenous people, marginalised and poor communities;
- Repeal amendment (8A) of Article 153 that was passed during the state of emergency in 1971 and was not in the original 1957 federal constitution;
- Institutionalize means testing for any access to scholarships or other entitlements;
- Implement merit-based recruitment in civil & armed services;
- Enact an Equality Act to promote equality and non-discrimination irrespective of race, creed, religion, gender or disability with provision for an Equality & Human Rights Commission;
- Promote equality & human rights education in schools, unions, institutions;

13GE Demand #1: Eradicate Institutional Racism

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- Ratify the Convention on the Eradication of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights and Economic, Social & Cultural Rights.