

RACISM

is so yesterday

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KUALA LUMPUR: From housing to jobs, education to citizenry, bigotry in Malaysia is a simmering cauldron.

Since MCA's boldly brazen demand last weekend for an end to the 30% bumiputera equity, it's not only the politicians and NGOs who are openly slamming each other over a broad range of unfair policies but the man-on-the-street is also spewing his disgust.

In Kuala Lumpur, a recently married engineer, who declined to be named, said he had trouble renting a double-storey property in a housing estate in Old Klang Road because he was Indian.

"It's not the first time I have faced this problem. A Chinese landlord is not likely to rent you a room or house. It took me three months to find a landlord who would rent a house to us and even then we had to reassure him many times... I had to show him my payslips!" he said.

In Penang, Nabrizza Ghazali, a private sector employee, said racism was rife in the commercial sector which is controlled by the Chinese community.

She said the situation was so bad that it was difficult for Malays and Indians to secure high-paying jobs in certain sectors although they had the right qualification.

"Many Malays and Indians who have been in employment for years and who are qualified for higher posts don't move up. This is mostly because the Chinese who are less qualified and with

lesser experience are given priority.

"I have had the experience of going for a job interview and the first question they asked me was if I knew Chinese. The employer said their company was looking for someone who was fluent in Chinese to liaise with other employees," she said.

Another employee, Edmand Steven Grumach, echoed Nabrizza's views.

He said many private sector workers in Penang had problems "even getting an interview" because many of the large companies including the manufacturing sector required employees to speak Chinese.

"This condition is not applicable to low-paying jobs... it clearly shows the racist attitudes by employers. As a private sector employee, I hope that companies in Penang will not be bias and provide all with equal job opportunities," he said.

Now an open truth

According to Penang Malay Association deputy chairman Azmi Merican, racism in the job sector was now an open truth.

"It has become so extreme that it is denying Malays and Indians of opportunities in the private sector. Race has always been a priority with the Chinese and the majority of Malays and Indians have been deprived of employment opportunities for irrational reasons.

"Among the reasons made mandatory in the Penang private sector is that applicants must be fluent in the Chinese language and most of the positions are limited to the Chinese community.

"Many of the positions advertised in the papers carry this condition. It is a subtle oppression of the Malays and Indians in Penang," he said.

Azmi said even if there were Malays and Indians who met the criteria, the salary scale offered to them as compared to the Chinese, was different.

"Now it's the new Chinese community which controls the private sector in Penang. But what was once a subtle practice of racism was now open and obvious. The Chinese are always touching on bumiputera equity but the Malays don't complain about their (Chinese) racist practices in the commercial sector," he told FMT.

Azmi said although it was understood that the Chinese community practiced double standards it had never been raised as an issue but now they (the Chinese) were openly voicing their dissatisfaction with the Malays and the policies enshrined in the constitution.

"If the Malay and Indian communities don't voice up to the way the Chinese treat them than they

will continue to be sidelined,” he said.