

# **Matriculation - Pakatan Harapan Coalition has to decide which to pursue, affirmative action based on needs (class) or ethnicity?**

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**The Malaysian Matriculation Programme (Malay: Program Matrikulasi Malaysia) is a one or two-year pre-university preparatory programme [1] offered by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Starting 2005, the selection process for the programme is done through a race-based quota system, where 90% of the places are reserved for bumiputeras students while the remaining 10% are open for non-bumiputeras.**

Yesterday, Education Minister Maszlee Malik said the cabinet decided to increase student intake into the pre-university matriculation programme from 25,000 to 40,000 while maintaining the quota system allocating 90 percent of seats for bumiputera, and 10 percent for non-bumiputera will remain.

In recent weeks, the social media has been abuzz with Pakatan Harapan Coalition (PH) bashing after many high scoring Malaysian Indians students were denied entry into the matriculation intake. MIC had a field day ridiculing Indian PH leaders for betraying the Indians while claiming under BN, 2200 Indians students were given places. The PH leaders and Education Minister countered this by saying that this was one off deal where in 2018, an additional 2,200 and 1,000 matriculation studies seats were allocated to Indian and Chinese students. However you look at it, the argument is shallow.

The truth is, PH leaders are getting their back own medicine because before this, they had been busy attacking MIC for not delivering places for Indian students. Therefore' obviously it is payback time for MIC now when the tables are turned around. This has been the racial politics of yesterdays, which is very much alive and kicking today. PH Indian leaders in DAP and PKR will aim their gun on MIC vice-versa, while MCA on DAP etc. These politics have not changed. Rather the only thing which has changed is where they are standing today- in different sides in the same opposing ways.

Under this order, then the fight between PH and BN is who is more Malay, More Islamic, More Multiracial, more pro Indian, more pro Chinese etc. The issues gets even more clouded when issues involving royalty, qualification UEC exams. Rome Statute, appointment of AG & Ministers and everything else becomes a racial religious issues rather than issues based on substance and rationality.

The PH Government has to make it clear which route it wants to pursue. If it wants to pursue the race agenda of the BN legacy or wants to take a class line like once preached by Anwar Ibrahim that PR will pursue Ketuanan Rakyat rathan than Ketuanan Melayu. Malay supremacy versus Peoples supremacy. Today his slogan as "Anak Melayu, Anak Cina, Anak India, Anak Kadazan, Anak Iban semua anak saya" has been become a joke shared in coffee talk while the race agenda still tops the main agenda.

In the recent matriculation issue, the PH Government has continued to puzzle me because at one instance the Minister says that it will 90% Bumiputera and 10% Non Bumiputera. The ministry further states that 60% of the places will be given to those from the bottom 40 (B40) income bracket, with the remaining 40% given to the middle 40 (M40) and top 20 (T20).

Previously under the quota system, many Indians students were unable to get places when non Bumi seats were based on meritocracy because the Indians had to compete the seats with Chinese students which are presumed to be scoring higher result and better economic background. Then the Indian NGOs were fighting for separate quota of 10% for Indian students. Initially many Indians were not very excited about matriculation because in an environment where 90% will be Malay students, they were afraid their children will be victim of religious conversion. Today, with neo-liberal education and privatisation of education playing a major role, education has become so expensive and unaffordable. Today there is a huge demand for matriculation because it is fully subsidised.

Therefore it is only fair that those who cannot afford be given a place. I am sure if the system is based on class, then many poor students from all races especially a big bulk will be Bumiputera students from Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak will make the big bulk of it. I think a system based in helping those in needs will be accepted by all if it is explained properly.

The current system based on race quota will continue to segregate our society and will continue to give racial based politics from both divide to continue to politicise education. At the end of the day, our education system will continue to be tainted with accusation of discrimination and this will further divide the people. Imagine if young people continue to be brought up based on race based quota education system, what kind of perception will they take home as leaders of our nation in future.

PH must be brave enough to bring about a new culture based on equality and be compassion to the community who are most disadvantaged economically. Education must be made accessible to the most disadvantaged group in order to lift them up. One of the biggest mistake made by PH is having separate supplementary manifesto for Indians and Malays as this will continue its members taking up issues based on ethnicity rather than class.

PH has to prove that it is not BN 2.0. Currently they have failed to explain their position clearly before implementing something or failed to implement something, after getting pressure. In all scenario, PH political parties as a coalition should be on the same page on major issues such as ICERD, Rome Statute, UEC, Death penalty, Sedition Act and others. Then they have to put the message across to the larger population. We have seen on many of these issues, there seems to be no consensus. PH is suppose to be the coalition of hope but it has so far not giving much hope with its numerous U-turns and un-kept promises.

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