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Forty but still immature and out of control

WHAT we need most, at 40, is control. Maturity of thought, courage in facing up to the truth and our convictions, and confidence in our own ability.

What we don't need is control freaks. Those who insist on deciding how we live, how we think, and even our destiny.

Malaysian sport has suffered more than prospered in the 40 years of Independence because of these control freaks who are motivated by self-interest and their own agendas.

Because it is our nature to be subservient, self-effacing and trusting, we never questioned motives or actions even when they were clearly wrong.

Do we still have to do that now that we are 40?

Isn't that why we find ourselves at odds, unable to defend ourselves when financial markets are brutally attacked?

Or did prosperity make us soft, docile creatures who took prosperity for granted as our birth-right?

Are we, as a nation, paying the price for our fears? Fear of not wanting to spoil a good thing? Fear of voicing dissent or questioning authority? Right from wrong?

By playing only to one rule, we now find that we have not been prepared to fend off assaults on a less than level global field which is slanted to favour the powerful and the rich.

We find ourselves not equipped to play the game by the rules which change day by day to favour certain forces. Just like in international sports.

In adversity, we find that we still have to depend on the same old players. Just like in our sports.

Where are the future stars? Where are the Mokhtar Daharis and Soh Chin Auns? The Datuk Seri Dr Mahathirs, the fire-brand backbencher who questioned, challenged and provoked thought and raised awareness among the people?

Instead, we have tame, insipid athletes, with a few exceptions, who need to be spoonfed and mollycoddled. Just like the sycophants in government, with a few exceptions of course, who play to the tune, often mindlessly.

Where are the innovators, thinkers, movers and shakers? The winners who can realise dreams of a brighter future?

Why is it that, like a handful of our sportsmen and women, like Shalin Zulkifli and Nicol David for instance, we only have Dr Mahathir single-handedly fighting our battles in the world arena?

We cannot be a force in the global picture if we don't, or can't, stand up and meet confrontations head-on. Exchange blow for blow standing on our feet. Our sportsmen, except for a few exceptions, so often take it lying down.

The new yoke of colonialism is one of economic control and we have to develop the weapons to fight it. But Dr Mahathir appears to be our only champion. Just as in our sport.

The open global market leaves those who aren't prepared so vulnerable - open targets.

It's like throwing in a football team into the World Cup Finals without adequate preparation and training. They would be eaten up alive.

Our rich sporting scene is an example. Only thing is, the raiders doing the exploiting are from within. More so of late when the pickings have got

so much richer with billions of ringgit involved.

Now we even have to contend with so called religious officials. Not the esteemed council of ulama, but individuals who would decide what is right and wrong.

So sport, the one thing which brings our mutlti-faceted nation together, and which is the answer to our social woes, is now a threat. Bodybuilding for a start, who knows what else after that.

But why now? Were past generations of our revered leaders, elders and religious teachers wrong?

Did I commit a sin when I played sport in shorts or swam only in swimming trunks?

It's like being told that we have been living life wrongly all this while. Do we have so little faith in ourselves?

So, is it mid-life crisis, Malaysia is facing at 40? Are evil forces at work to undermine our economic miracle? To subvert and destabilise our wonderful nation?

There are, apparently no answers, only conspiracy theories and everyone has his or her own? The rumour mills are working overtime but the truth is out there somewhere.

The truth, which seems to be missing from the equation. Aren't we, at 40, not ready for the truth?

We must make a stand now. The great nation that we have built is at stake.

Are there those who fear the progress we have made? Who can't comprehend the changes. Who fear that they will be left behind or lose control. Insecure little men who fight back the only way they know, using unfair means if necessary. Using religion and other sensitivities as their tool as extremists, fanatics and zealots do.

I always took pride in Islam not having the blot of the Inquisition on its history. Individuals forcing their dogmas and misinterpretations on the people through fear of persecution.

We risk the same if we don't do something about it.

Control is fine in measured terms. We need religion to keep us in moral rein, just as we need government for law and order.

But too much of it, some completely unwarranted and unjustified, will only stifle and destroy.

Dr Mahathir said in his National Day speech: "Don't think that once we are independent, we will be independent forever.

"If we do not strive to preserve and safeguard our independence, colonialists will return to control us directly or indirectly."

At 40, we should at least be realising that Malaysia, as a nation, is nothing if all the races don't work together in unison and harmony on common goals. Be a team player just like in sports.

We must stop exploiting each other's weaknesses but rather ride on our strengths to become a team of winners.

Otherwise, we will leave ourselves vulnerable to attempts to destabilise along with economic manipulation and domination.

We will risk losing true independence as we become colonies beholden to economic powers.

And we will all be losers. Just like in sports.

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