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Support Dr Mahathir in openly discussing Islam

Jay Abdullah

I AM a Muslim Malay and proud to be one. I have, however, often been troubled by issues regarding the interpretation and administration of Islam in this country. I have no forum by which I can openly discuss these issues.

I was not encouraged to discuss them since young, and if I do, I am not only frowned upon but accused of blaspheming my religion. There have been many moments when I became very disheartened and disillusioned and I found that many others share my concerns but suffer the same fate.

Can you imagine my profound joy in finding that the leader of my country, this courageous man of vision, openly discussing these issues with the whole nation as his audience?

If not for any other reason (and there are many others), this alone has earned Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad my undying loyalty and support, not to mention deep admiration. (Be assured, I am not an Umno member or a member of the Government "establishment".)

This is the first Malay Muslim leader to have the courage and conviction to challenge the so-called conventional wisdom.

Islam is a timeless and universal religion, neither time nor geographic specific, but many (and I do mean many) have not allowed it to be so.

In the practice of our religion, there has been too much stress on form and less on substance. We must at all times apparently be seen to be good Muslims (by whatever yardstick that is meted out) but whether indeed we are substantively good Muslims, at heart and in practice, seem less important.

I can abide by fanaticism no matter how lamentable it is but I cannot tolerate hypocrisy, saying one thing and doing another.

And I do wholeheartedly applaud your statement in your "Other Thots" column on Sunday (Sept 7) when you said "Pas and the extremist elements are able to do less damage to the peace and harmony of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious society than the hypocrisy, reticence and inactivity of Umno leaders and members".

Dr Mahathir deserves the support of everyone on this issue, not because he is the Prime Minister or the president of Umno but because he is right.

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