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Please mind your language, Mr Gore

Askiah Adam

AL Gore tells us that reformasi is synonymous with democracy. To shout reformasi is to demand democracy.

I am disappointed. When the Clinton-Gore campaign arrived in the White House much was written about the cerebral running mate, now vice-president. He had a book to his name. Not just any book but one extolling the environmentalist position.

At last, the world's mightiest nation had seen fit, if not to make the world's most powerful man an accredited intellectual then, at least, the one waiting in the wings should misfortune befall the president. (Looks like that can happen if Clinton is impeached).

Unfortunately, notwithstanding an enviable environmentalist credential, his diplomacy and knowledge of politics leaves much to be desired.

Granted it is currently very fashionable to come out of the closet and call a spade a spade. America and Britain unabashedly tell the world that their intention is to oust Saddam Hussein.

Clearly they believe that they are doing the Iraqis a favour otherwise they should understand that to meddle in a sovereign nation's internal arrangements so openly is illegal.

Presumably, the premise is that the Iraqis are too stupid to know better or too cowed to be able to do the right thing, that is, get rid of their leader.

The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said time and time again that the international media (I would read 'international' as 'western') is trying to make and break leaders and governments.

Now, it is powerful foreign powers who are openly ganging up to determine the mosaic of national leaderships. Why? Natives do not know what's good for them, especially the silent majority.

Maybe it is time for the majority to stop being silent and peacefully spill out onto the streets of the capital and other cities to point out to the world that we want democracy that will maintain peace, harmony and prosperity that has become the Malaysian identity. We Malaysians value the Prime Minister's contributions to date, albeit it is not a flawless one.

But show us a democracy that is truly perfect. What about the underclass in the ghettos of the American cities; the native Americans in their reservations?

Whither the equal opportunity for government grants to Muslim schools in the UK? How is it that enough are forced to live in poverty amidst plenty in both the US and the UK? Are we to believe that democratic rights is the privilege money will buy?

Yes, every adult who has not forfeited his or her right to vote can be a voter. This is also true here. Yes, there is relatively cheap, if not entirely free, universal education. We, too, are similarly fortunate.

There is welfare provisions for the poor. Look at our low-cost housing; our almost free medical services at government hospitals; scholarships and other means determined educational benefits; and, most importantly but often forgotten, land schemes for the landless.

These are but the most essential is a socio-economic system whose imperative is redistribution of wealth without robbing Peter to give Paul. This is Malaysia today.

Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, the minority dictated to the majority a vision that after some 70 years proved to be completely false.

Is there any reason to see the reformasi movement with its small band of irrational ringleaders as any more credible than the Bolsheviks?

John Stuart Mill lamented the possibility of the dictatorship of the mediocre because he feared for the intellectual wherewithal of the English 19th century majority.

Is it possible that American democracy is elitist? If it is then it is not truly democratic, is it?

Our Prime Minister, the former Prime Minister of Singapore and many other Asian leaders are big enough to admit that they may require democracies peculiar to the need of their countries. Therefore, they have never admitted to having a perfect democracy.

Yes, admittedly there are grouses, even among the silent majority. We worry about the alarming rate of corruption because we have known times of clean government. This, for a nation that has been in existence for just over 40 years is quite an achievement - our ability to make a comparison internally without reference to the so-called democratic west.

Some of us do feel that it is time the National Development Policy is implemented fully so that a truly Malaysian Malaysia will emerge. Others are sore that the media failed to be more independent. Those in the media are frustrated by the nit-picking censorship bureaucrats. Yes, everyone feels hard done by in some form or another.

However, we owe a debt of gratitude to our leaders, past and present for having put in place a system that can reconcile sharp conflicts imminent and immanent in our ethnic make up.

Thank you Mr Gore but no thank you. We, the Malaysian silent majority can solve our problems peaceably to benefit us before anyone else. You are much mistaken in thinking the call for reformasi is synonymous with democracy.

Please understand that most of those who hide under the banner of reform in the current political turbulence are nothing but opportunists who will not shy away from oppression to ensure their stranglehold on power if they are ever lucky enough to get it. Do not do Malaysians a disservice by commenting on local peculiarities that you have little knowledge of.

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