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Malaysians must fight `monster' in our midst

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BUILDING a civilisation may take a thousand years. Destroying one, on the other hand, may take less than a day. With that in mind let us, as a nation and as a people, take a moment to ponder our future in light of recent happenings.

What happened in Sauk, in light of the further revelations by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his televised interview, shows a serious, festering problem in our midst.

This problem will not go or fade away. Nor can it be resolved without the participation of every tolerant, moderate and peace-loving Malaysian.

The monster that we are facing is born of bigotry, fertilised by hate-mongers and tended by extreme and blind devotion to a narrow, partisan political ideology.

That monster is the politics of hate, intolerance and extremism.

We are equally guilty in allowing it to grow within our midst, aided by our indifference. We let certain purveyors of the politics of hate roam free in our midst, preaching their beliefs under the guise of democracy and free speech.

We did nothing to condemn them and the Government took no action, either. Sometimes the Government issued threats.

I cannot imagine what will happen if these people capture power. One thing is for sure. The perpetrators of Memali and Sauk will be declared our national heroes.

How then do we look our children in the eye and tell them that the Malaysia and the constituent Malaysian that is tolerant, diverse and moderate is no longer here, that our founding fathers' dream of a place where all races can live and work together in peace and harmony has been shattered?

When that moment arrives, all will be lost. We can no longer turn back and that will be a sad day in the history of our nation.

Do we want what happened in the Balkans to happen here, where neighbours who have lived together peacefully turn on each other, spurred on by politicians playing the tune of racial and religious extremism and bigotry?

Look what is happening in the Maluku Islands in Indonesia. It can happen here. If we do not want this to happen, then we must not take a passive stand. As citizens, as voters and as members of political parties, we must put our foot down. In our own small way, we individually can take action collectively. This will become a strong and loud voice, that we Malaysians are not to be taken for granted.