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Perils of complacency

Datuk Seri Adib Adam

THE situation in the country is fast turning into a comedy or errors. Unfortunately, there will be nothing to laugh about if we allow the flow of the current direction to persist.

I am writing an appeal to Malaysians to come to their senses before all is lost.

That a serious security breach can bring on charges of government manipulation reflects a measure of dangerous opportunism by some members of various opposition groups.

It saddens me that citizens who are best equipped, intellectually, to see beyond their immediate needs are the very people responsible for trying to whip up the masses towards irresponsible actions.

I urge them to take a step back and reflect on Fiji's vulnerability to foreign interference and think on the simple fact of Malaysia's ability to withstand similar pressures.

This, more than anything else, has resulted in (Datuk Seri) Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) becoming a much-maligned leader in the foreign Press. It is not so much prosperity that they hold against us, rather it is our dignity that they resent.

Reflect, too, on the unending coverage by CNN of the violence on Maluku Islands and their portrayal of the conflict as one between Muslims and Christians. That it exploded as a result of the overnight impoverishment of almost half the Indonesians, after the recent economic downturn, is conveniently forgotten.

The significant fact here is the right of freedom of religion. When completely blown out of perspective and proportion, it can be the pretext for, not only international intervention but, more importantly, unilateral intrusion by the world's only superpower. Coming from the secular world, this is rich.

While I do agree that the too often repeated theme - "threat of neo-colonialist imperialism" - can get tiresome, reason tells me that it is a necessary action, one that the Prime Minister is loath to do but feels compelled anyway because of the nation's own complacency.

Malaysia is about the only developing nation that has come through the development obstacle course, largely able to maintain its sovereignty intact in the face of the current unipolar world. Several factors contribute to this good fortune.

Firstly, the Almighty has endowed us with ample natural resources. Secondly, Malaysia did not prosper on the back of preferential tariff agreements as some others did.

Our leaders, through a combination of sound and ingenious economic judgments allowed for an enviable rate of wealth accumulation. And lastly, prudent policies have kept us buffered against the blackmail of foreign aid (with strings attached).

Dr Mahathir has been in power for almost two decades now and this is often used against him. The West tells us that he is bad only because he has lasted so long.

According to them nobody can remain in power for that long without necessarily injuring the country. They forget, however, to tell us that a durable leadership guarantees continuity and when this is put to work positively the results can be tremendous - favouring the people.

Also worth noting is the fact that a strong leader is not always a

dictator. Maybe Malaysians ought to blame themselves just as much.

The Prime Minister's excessive strength appears so only because we, the majority, have found it comfortable to allow him the pleasure of direction because he has delivered to all Malaysians a great deal in 20 years, which in terms of economic growth is a short time.

It is now our responsibility as a nation to translate growth into development, which is manifest only in our political maturity. We destroy whatever we have now at our own peril for, afterwards, the future will no longer be ours to determine.