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The new Malay and who he is

THE temptation to forget our roots is always there, especially when readily available new-found wealth smiles at us. For some, it is time to be more arrogant and rude and for the rare few who can manage prosperity well, it is a humbling experience to be able to do more for themselves and others with their extra wealth. That is, without forgetting the old-world values they were brought up with - self-discipline, self-respect, guts and a certain determination that points to not taking things for granted.

Alas, the thinking ones in the tide of humanity who manage to retain their dignity are few and far in between. Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad did not mince words when he said at the Umno General Assembly yesterday that among some urban Malays now, new values have emerged. That it is unnecessary to feel obliged to their benefactors has gained acceptance, that it is not wrong to condemn and ridicule them. And these values are further eroded by politicians with vested interests.

Sadly, for these people who wittingly or unwittingly allow themselves to be made tools of, and who believe that it is all right to bite the hand that feeds them, it is high time for some soul-searching. These are the same people who have been made more prosperous through the success of the New Economic Policy and the Government's efforts in helping to instil more meaning into their lives. These are not the Melayu baru the country can be proud of. As Dr Mahathir points out, there are those who portray the new Malays as drunkards, womanisers and gamblers which of course is not the breed of new Malays we mean.

As a party responsible for championing the rights of the race, religion and country, Umno is also responsible for increasing the number of new Malays. Essentially, they are the ones who learn to face life's challenges through their ability to control their desires and avoid negative values which overwhelm them after they leave their villages and enjoy life in the urban areas. The new Malays hold strongly to Islam, are disciplined and believe God will help those who help themselves. To spread this new Malay culture among other Malays, it has to be leadership by example.

The party leader's exhortation to members is, without doubt, sensible and practical. Malays will not be less Malay if they take a leaf from the book of other communities in handling wealth. They have to co-operate with the Government's efforts in bettering their lot, learn to be less choosy and not be complacent, especially when the challenge of a borderless world is on everyone.

Life is a struggle and cliched though it may sound to some, Umno's struggle is far from over. If anything, it needs to be intensified for the challenges are not just external but internal as well. If members are not to lose what they already have, everyone must sit up and realise that not everyone can be a powerful leader or be rich, which has never been the party's objective or promise in the first place. If greed and corruption are not to become part of the culture, each and everyone has to join hands in eradicating them.

The root of the matter is that in unity lies strength, and it is in a practising democracy and the mastery of skills and knowledge that development and progress can be achieved. Common sense dictates that in being true to the heart and mind, any self-respecting individual can stand tall, and that the truth will always prevail.

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