

30/06/2001

Lingering fear but success story can be source of inspiration

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PETRONAS has indeed made Malaysians proud.

It has managed to chalk up RM129.5 billion in gross revenue and nearly one-third of that came from its investments abroad.

It is a Malaysian success story. It is also a Malay success story.

After all, most Malays have been looking around, searching for a success story of their own in the corporate world.

There had been others but accusations of cronyism, nepotism and corruption, rightly or wrongly, had negated some of the successes achieved by Malay corporate leaders.

As such, the fact that Petronas is led, managed and supported by employees who are mainly Malays, stands as living proof that Malays are as capable as the non-Malays in the competitive corporate world.

It is not about having a chip on one's shoulder or the need to blow the trumpet at every little success that could be associated with the Malays, especially when these successes came about with Government support.

But it does help the Malays with low self-esteem or those who believe that nothing good has come out of the system for the community.

While debates over this can go on forever, there are suspicions that the fire at Universiti Malaya's Dewan Tunku Canselor was an act of arson.

There is widespread talk that it was the work of students trying to sabotage the student leadership symposium scheduled to start today and end tomorrow. Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will officiate at the opening and the closing ceremony by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

And of course, fingers are being pointed at Malay student activists who have publicly shown their hatred for and opposition against the country's present leadership.

At this stage, there is nothing conclusive to determine whether the fire was a work of arson or due to some electrical faults.

However, if it was indeed a work of arson by the disaffected Malay students, the community is indeed being dragged into something more sinister.

In the past, the Malays, especially the older generation, were worried about the lepak (loafing) culture; they were told to be more competitive and aggressive in their pursuits of education. Instead, they became combative.

Then came the bohsia and bohjan (teenage sex) shock.

Amidst all these unresolved problems affecting the Malay youths, the drug abuse menace among them persists unabated.

If arson or the destruction of properties is seen as a legitimate means to express their frustration with the establishment, the disenchanted Malay students have truly embraced a new explosive, destructive culture.

The worrying question is: why is it so plausible to believe - at such an early stage in the investigation - that the UM's building fire was a work of arson?

One supposes it has a lot to do with a recent trend among student activists from the UM campus.

A letter from a reader to Utusan Malaysia which appeared on Friday was very revealing.

The reader, going by the name of B.K. Muslimin, alleged that a recent student demonstration against the Internal Security Act at Masjid Negara

was an exploitation of freshies.

He claimed that the activists, who were seniors, invited the freshies to attend a convention but they were instead taken to the National Mosque and forced to take part in the illegal demonstration.

On the one hand, quite a number of Malays are proud of the courage of these students in their readiness to "fight" for their ideals.

But, on the other, the non-Malays are not prepared to join in despite sharing similar ideals and are more concerned about their studies.

The great disparity in examination results among the Malay and non-Malay students has continued to be so glaring that fingers are pointed at the inability of the Malay students to get their priorities right.

Now talks circulating about Malay students setting fire to a building as a sign of protest - a painful reminder to the rest of the Malays how far things have really gone wrong with the community.

Come to think of it - the Malays are neither oppressed nor are they victimised. They are in fact a privileged lot, getting into the universities because the Government of the day is still pursuing "affirmative action".

Is there no sense of shame or dignity anymore?

Is there no pride? No realisation that the non-Malays are perceiving that the Malays are incapable and are there in the public institutions of higher learning simply because of the quota?

There is a beautiful Malay girl from Triang, Pahang, whose parents operate a stall in Felda Bukit Puchong.

Arnizun Arifin, 20, is into her second year at Universiti Malaya pursuing Applied Chemistry.

She works part-time at a cafe in Bangsar during her free time to earn some extra income to pay for her education.

Quiet and dependable, Arnizun provides hope for the Malay community that it is unfair to generalise all Malay students in negative light.

However, the question is whether Arnizun represents the majority.

While the Malays ponder over this, the lingering fear that Malay students are quite capable of acts of arson, should send shivers down their spines.