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'Recovery will be smooth'

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad

OUR gratitude to Allah s.w.t. In this turbulent regional political and economic scenario, Malaysia is still calm and able to overcome relentless assaults on its politics and economy, from outsiders as well as their friends internally.

Not so long ago, many Malaysians, too, craved to organise what they called Reformasi, apparently to correct the situation in Malaysia. They were inspired by what had happened in another country.

Without taking into account the different situation in that country, they tried through irresponsible means to force the Government to give in to their demands, including to overthrow the Government.

Their leaders had gone abroad to seek assistance so that the street violence they planned could be implemented. They knew that Malaysians were not interested in committing violence even though they were paid. That was why foreigners were needed.

Unfortunately for these perpetrators of street violence, the leadership of the foreign country concerned felt that it was enough that chaos occurred only in his country.

They did not want to see chaos spread to Malaysia. They did not see any good from the chaos in their country. Therefore they did not encourage any assistance to those planning to incite disorder in Malaysia. Thank God. We appreciate this foreign leader's attitude and stand.

The situation in Malaysia is not flawless and this we must admit. The Government too admits this. But we have to appreciate the good that we receive. We should be grateful to Allah s.w.t. Many foreigners see us as being very fortunate and blessed that they are willing to risk their lives just to migrate to our country.

Other countries may need reformasi and a change in the political system and Government. Just because others need reformasi, does it mean that we too must have reformasi? In fact, the changes to be made in other countries have already been implemented in Malaysia since independence.

This country has never been under an autocratic or military rule. It was only in 1969 that we were forced to have an emergency rule. But in a short period of time we reverted to a democratic system and held the general election according to schedule in 1974.

Since independence we have held 10 general elections within a period of 43 years. Malaysians are free to choose whoever they want and not only candidates from the government party like in some countries.

Opposition parties too can win elections and have established governments in four states. And this happened repeatedly. No legal action was taken to prevent opposition party representatives from taking their place in Parliament as in some countries.

Therefore, why do we need reform in our democratic system of administration? Why do we need street demonstrations which only serve to cause traders to lose, in particular petty traders whose daily survival depends on their daily income?

Apparently, they wanted to see the rule of law. But to uphold the rule of law do they need to break the law through street violence, blocking cars, forcing shops to close down and disturbing public order?

Those who wish to uphold the rule of law should not break the law. They should use the legal process to stop the violation of laws by any quarters, including the Government. We know in Malaysia, not all cases are

won by the Government. And not all government party candidates win elections.

That is why at times in trying to prove independence, the Government is denied justice and loses. If the Government dares to disagree, it will come under increasing pressure. Foreigners ever willing to condemn the Government for the slightest mistakes. Certain quarters know this and become bolder. Justice is therefore undermined.

Today they can see that the fruits of reformasi in that particular country which they lauded so much are not that appealing. What is evident is that rule of law cannot be imposed as those responsible for enforcing law have lost credibility. The people are not safe. In certain areas people riot, terrorise and kill indiscriminately. Far from benefiting from the democratic process, what is seen as a result of reformasi is mob-rule, a lawless rule by street mobs. Things have improved compared with the situation during the autocratic rule.

Ironically, those who want reforms, the rule of law and the upholding of human rights were once too happy to join the Government. Why did they not then accuse the Government as undemocratic and abusive of human rights when they were in the Government?

Actually, what frustrates them is not the system of government, but their failure to achieve their big ambitions. They like to flatter the whites and are happy if they are praised by these mat sallehs. Actually these idiots are nothing if not for what we have given them. Unfortunately, they are not used to getting a bit of power. Even with a minor position, they get big-headed and will dance to their master's tune.

Those who tried to champion for reforms have been duped and were made use of by certain people. While they have gained nothing those who made use of them gained a lot by faking sympathy towards their idol. Until when are they going to be idiots?

When mob rule culture is accepted by their favoured country, the Government is powerless to do anything to revive the economy. Whatever they do will be opposed. They run riot and the rioting itself caused any effort by the Government to fail.

As the English proverb says, "Those who live by the sword, shall die by the sword". Those who rise through street demonstrations will fall through street demonstrations.

The Government becomes weak and is not able to act decisively. Pressure on the Government can be imposed by anyone, including foreigners. As a result not only economic recovery becomes impossible, but independence, which once was a source of pride, is now almost non-existent. This is the result of reformasi and street demonstrations. Do we want to see all these brought to our country by this reformasi group?

The Malaysian economy has recovered albeit not fully. This is not due to the weakness of our approach but due to the economic slowdown of other countries.

We have faced economic pressures similar to that faced by other countries in East Asia. We were unable to determine if the simultaneous attacks on the currencies of the countries of the East, formerly known as the tiger economies, were planned or not.

But what is evident is these countries' economy was destroyed and they may never be able to challenge the West. Further, foreign powers are taking advantage to control the management of their economy through international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Countries which were attacked were forced to submit to foreign powers not only because of the economic recession but also due to their people's irresponsible actions. Because there were people who wanted to topple the

leadership, the economic recession caused by the foreign enemy were exploited and this weakened the economic resilience. This eroded the country's independence.

If today Malaysia continues to be free and its economy fully controlled by ourselves, it is because not many of its citizens have betrayed the country, directly or indirectly working in cohorts with foreigners. Because of this we have been able to revive the country's economy better than countries which received loans and "help" from foreigners.

The world today, including our detractors, is forced to accept this fact. Only a fraction of Malaysians who are blinded by hate cannot face this reality.

We are confident that with the stability and peace in Malaysia, the country's economic recovery will progress smoothly. The recovery, too, proves that the nation's fiscal and economic management is good.

It is impossible that we can resuscitate the economy if allegations of Government's wastage over mega projects are true. Actually the country's fiscal position is solid.

During the crisis, our money was siphoned out due to the higher interest rates offered outside the country. For several months, Malaysian banks were short of liquidity. But the Government managed to stop the outflow of the ringgit and forced it to be repatriated. Since then our financial position had strengthened and the economy recovered rapidly.

Malaysians can truly count their blessings. Those who should be even more grateful are the Malays. But many are not thankful and hope good fortune will come rolling on its own without any effort.