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Burning of our Jalur Gemilang unforgiveable

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THE sacrilegious act of Indonesian demonstrators in burning our Jalur Gemilang and trying to overrun our embassy in Jakarta is an uncivilised act that cannot be forgiven.

Nevertheless, there is no need for us Malaysians to lower ourselves to their level in a tit-for-tat reprisal, as nothing we do can make the Indonesians as a nation and as a people worse off than they are now.

For me the burning of the Jalur Gemilang signifies the end of any need for a "special relationship" between the two nations based on commonalities of race, religion, culture or language.

In the future, the bilateral relations between both nations should be based purely on the basis of our respective national interests.

I do not think a policy of "prosper thy neighbour" would be appropriate in our dealings with Indonesia; a more correct policy would be one of containment.

What happens really begs the question why Malaysia as a sovereign and independent nation cannot implement its laws on Indonesians, what is so special about Indonesians that they should be immune from Malaysian laws?

Realistically, the Malaysian economy cannot perpetually afford to depend on the input of cheap foreign labour as the basis of growth.

We should instead strive for Total Factor Productivity to generate a healthy and sustainable growth.

We should no longer be apologetic in our relationship with Indonesia; the relationship on the basis of a senior brother to a junior brother should be henceforth terminated.

Indonesians it seems are too proud to acknowledge that a nation such as Malaysia that achieved its independence much later than Indonesia and achieving it not through a bloody revolution but through peaceful negotiations can be more advanced and developed than them.

Thirty-nine years ago when Malaysia was born, Indonesia under the communist-influenced Sukarno opposed it and launched an armed confrontation to scuttle it.

In a recent case when the Asean+3 secretariat was suggested to be hosted by Malaysia, it was vehemently opposed by Indonesia which was afraid it would overshadow the Asean secretariat in Jakarta.

That is the level of selfishness involved.

The Indonesian citizens and nation should realise once and for all that all the problems besetting them since the day of their independence on Aug 17, 1945 are caused not by others but by two glaring factors - first, the Indonesian leadership and second, the attitude of their people.

They should ask why the changes in leadership from Sukarno to Suharto, from Suharto to B.J. Habibie, from B.J. Habibie to Gus Dur and from Gus Dur to Megawati have not been able to solve their myriad of problems as a nation and as a people.

While in Malaysia under the leadership of the late Tengku until Dr Mahathir, progress has been made by the nation and the people.

All Malaysians should be thankful that efforts by left-leaning Malay nationalists in yesteryears who sought independence through the establishment of Indonesia Raya or Melayu Raya, a merger between what is now Malaysia and Indonesia were unsuccessful; had they been successful, today we would share in their misery.

Indonesians proudly declare that their independence is the only true independence, as it was achieved through a bloody revolution, not peaceful negotiations but they forget that in the time of Sukarno, the communists actually held sway over Indonesia and when Sukarno was toppled by Suharto, the Americans held sway as he was backed by the West, in particular the United States.

In 1997 when faced with an economic crisis the Indonesian state abdicated its independence and sovereignty, kneeling in the process at the feet of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The advice by our Foreign Minister for Malaysians to abstain from visiting Indonesia should be heeded.

If Malaysians are considered unwelcome guests and targets of abuse by petty-minded Indonesian officials, than we should take our tourist ringgit and business elsewhere. We must uphold our national dignity.

On our 45th anniversary, let us, Malaysians of all races, use this tragic burning of the Jalur Gemilang as a focal point to strengthen our national unity, renew our dedication to ensure that our nation will forever enjoy peace, prosperity and stability.

Let us not allow our dignity to be smeared a second time.

We must strengthen our national defence; our patriots who wear the uniform of the Malaysian Armed Forces must be rightly equipped and trained for the moment when their valour will be called upon to protect our