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Reject these religious bigots

P.G.

I AM an ordinary Malaysian. I have had a decent childhood and a decent education. I have a decent job, which gives me three square meals a day and helps me pay for my children's education and my house and car loans. When my children are older and go to college, I will make use of the government loan facility for higher education. I am saving a little of my salary for my old age.

I am lucky that I can go to a government hospital or clinic for treatment. That amounts to a huge saving as health costs are exorbitant and unaffordable in other countries. I am happy that I can safely walk the streets at 9pm. I wouldn't dare do so in New York or London. Perhaps, what is most gratifying is that I am able to follow the religion of my choice and my culture without hindrance.

I was born after Independence. Freedom was a gift of the older generation to us. They fought like lions the communist guerillas who were hell-bent on making Malaya a communist republic. I only read of their great sacrifices and heroic struggles in history books.

My first nasty jolt was during the 1969 communal riots. I pray it never recurs.

I have also survived occasional bouts of economic downturn when I had to tighten my belt to put the three meals on the table. Perhaps, the worst one was the East Asian financial crisis of July 1997 when our economy went into a tailspin and we were almost insolvent.

That's all history now. We have triumphantly emerged from death's door, thanks to the economic wisdom of our former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who steered the country out of the woods. Our economy is now glowing.

The Malaysian sun will continue to shine brightly and we will build a materially and spiritually wealthy nation in which every Malaysian has a stake.

This is the promise of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

If you think about it, all this is possible only because our national leaders and most Malaysians have understood the need for balance, stability and interethnic harmony.

But we may lose everything if we allow the anarchists to have their way. The good times every Malaysian man, woman and child has so far enjoyed and is likely to enjoy for a long time yet may go up in flames if narrow-minded, self-serving politicians somehow come into power and destroy our time-tested political configuration. The most dangerous are the religious bigots parading as politicians.

We don't need to play with fire when things are looking up for us. We must not allow the religious bigots even a toehold in the management of our country, even a State.

Both Kelantan and Terengganu are sad stories relegated to the mortuary of human development. This we can do through the ballot box.

P.G.

Subang Jaya