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Sampling that spirit of freedom at a Merdeka landmark

DKL

Potent Opponent

AS Malaysians celebrate Merdeka, they should also pause and reflect: In a mere 46 years, they have achieved what their neighbours and others are still chasing (with forlorn hope). Many traditions and old ideas about logic, language, learning, progress and even religious values, were either overthrown or radically refashioned, amongst Bumiputeras especially. Tengku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, Tun Hussein Onn (he recast the Diarist) and Dr Mahathir have all shaped Malaysia. Soon it will be the turn of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

At the padang of the Selangor Club at midnight of Aug 30, 1957 (lowering of the Union Jack ceremony), and at Stadium Merdeka the next day for the proclamation of Merdeka by Tengku, the Diarist tasted the winds of change, saw the joyous faces of thousands of Malaysians and heard their shouts of Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka. He witnessed a new era. He was ecstatic and has been vindicated.

Merdeka, for the nation as much as the individual, essentially means the freedom to pursue one's interests in peace, the liberty to learn and acquire the means to develop and do the right thing. Malaysians should offer a prayer for what they have won and open their hearts to those who have lost.

The nation now faces what seems a potent force, which is a passionate opponent of modernity and technology, preferring its own definition about everything and anything. All is abhorrent except its version of governance, social codes, education and economic systems. A fellow columnist is angry with fellow Malaysians for making no conscious effort to oppose those who want to go back to the Middle Ages.

He shouted into the Diarist's cellphone: "This is not, presumably, the Malay majority decision. Then what are they doing about it?" He was agitated, very shaken. He claimed that Islam had been hijacked, used, distorted, reinvented to fit many different purposes (mainly political). The Diarist stated that Islam has been up for grabs for a long time.

The opponent's strategy of "return to Islam" seems to have worked in some quarters by embarrassing the Malays into line by suggesting they (the opposition) are being more "Islamic" and "moral" than the majority. The majority must fight those who have maligned Islam. (See editorial below.) The real danger is that Malays are being made to believe that they will only become powerful if they return to the Middle Ages! The view is assiduously fostered here as well as internationally. Have the Saudis become strong, independent and powerful since they came into being 71 years ago?