

Welcome to Indonesia's 34th province
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If Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's 'Project N', the sequel to former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's 'Project M' is realised, Tourism Malaysia will not need use the meaningless 'Malaysia, Truly Asia' as its slogan.

It will have to adopt the more apt 'Malaysia, Truly Indonesia'.

With numerous allegations that 3 million Indonesians have become Malaysian citizens with full bumiputera rights, then perhaps Malaysia, with the exception of Sabah, will soon be known as the 34th Province of Indonesia.

There will be no armed conflict to regain territory. It will be a walkover, like a human-wave flowing across the Imjin River.

From 1999, Indonesia created seven more provinces; Aceh, governed by Syariah law, was one of five provinces which received special status.

Perhaps, Indonesia's hypothetical 34th province, would also receive special status because the former independent nation, Malaysia, willingly absorbed Indonesians whilst ignoring its own citizens, who were then forced to migrate.

If that were to happen, it is Umno which should be considered responsible for laying our 'Indonesian' foundations - the end justifies the means.

Perhaps Umno leaders consider the Malaysian Malay useless. Hard-working Indonesian migrant workers, both legal and illegal ones, have been rewarded for their contributions to the economy with permanent residency and citizenship.

However, Umno leaders have ignored the consequences of cheating normal Malaysians.

The main losers will be the Malaysian Malays. For decades, they have been conditioned by Umno to accept handouts without valuing hard work and self-respect.

Umno leaders find the more industrious Indonesians worthy of their attention. Traces of the 'Malay identity' will be eradicated and the Ketuanan Melayu brigade will have nothing to crow about.

For the 'original' Malay Malaysians, benefits will now have to be shared between a bigger pool of people, and senior positions in government and the civil service will be fought over.

And why are the MCA and MIC silent on this issue? At allegedly 3 million Indonesians (and 1.75 million Filipinos in Sabah), the numbers of these pseudo-Malaysians outstrip the 1.9 million Indian Malaysians, many of whom have no birth certificates or a Mykad although they are third-generation Malaysians.

Indonesians have left their comfort zones and travelled thousands of kilometres to earn a living. They leave their families and their spouses for several years, to work for a pittance.

Despite the hardship and isolation, many have triumphed, so much so that one was made menteri besar. If anyone doubts the Indonesian work ethic, one need only observe how every other household has a maid. Eateries would be nowhere without Indonesians serving us.

At the provision shops or the pasar, Indonesians are thriving. Building sites, factories, plantations and petrol stations have Indonesians as their power-houses. What would we do without them? We are too proud to fill those jobs that we consider beneath our station. And yet, we treat the Indonesians with

disdain.

Absence of obsession

Malaysian and western friends living in Indonesia say that there are comparatively fewer cases of religious intolerance in Indonesia, a land of over 238 million people. True, there are cases of extremism but every nation has these.

Although many Indonesians are staunch nationalists, they consider themselves Indonesians first, before their individual racial, religious or ethnic identity. The Indonesians and their media, are not obsessed with race as we are.

In an every day situation, the Indonesian Muslim will sit and have coffee in a non-halal outlet, whilst his non-Muslim countryman drinks his beer. Indonesian Muslims do not froth at the mouth when pork or non-halal products are sold in a shop. Muslims are commonly employed in businesses which sell pork or alcohol.

A friend observed that the Malaysian Muslim checkout staff will gingerly pick up a can of pork with a plastic bag and then dispose of the plastic bag afterwards. Some Muslim children are banned from owning 'piggy' banks or the Miss Piggy (of the Muppets) stuffed toy.

And yet these same Muslims admit that when they go to Europe, America and Australia, they have no qualms about buying food from a shop that sells non-halal and halal food side-by-side. Are Malaysian Malays/Muslims hypocrites or it is a culture that our Malay and religious leaders have cultivated, to control us?

Things have worsened in Malaysia. Many homosexual Muslim men have gone to live with their partners in relatively liberal Indonesia.

During his tenure, Mahathir realised that the only way he and his henchmen could continue ruling the country was to alter the demography of Sabah and hence the electoral voting patterns of the nation.

Fearful of losing the elections, Mahathir spearheaded a project dubbed 'Project M', also known as 'Project IC', in the early 1990s in which it is alleged that hundreds of thousands of Filipino illegal immigrants became naturalised citizens.

BN turned a major social issue to their favour, with phantom voters, to ensure victory. Umno leaders are still not concerned about illegal immigration.

Ironically, when the RM17.7 billion Iskandar Malaysia project was launched in Johor in 2006, Mahathir was angry.

He said: "After the land is sold, the Malays will be driven to live at the edge of the forest and even in the forest itself. In the end, the area in Iskandar Malaysia will be filled with Singaporeans and populated with only 15 percent Malays."

Najib in his wisdom thinks he is doing the right thing in granting citizenship to Indonesian immigrants.

However, he forgets that many Indonesians will have experienced life under the authoritarian regime of Suharto. They will remember how the Indonesian society and economy floundered in the late 1990s. They will recall how Suharto filled Parliament and the cabinet with his own family members and his cronies.

This caused many politicians and the young, principally students, to organise nationwide protests against the despotic rule, cronyism and corruption.

Who knows? The new pseudo-Malaysians that Najib has created may lead the calls for reforms, just as their politically and democratic minded counterparts once did in Indonesia.

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