Truth often hurts
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Najib Abdul Razak told the Malays to stop their dependency on the government, and especially on Umno, to get them easy projects and business perks. They have to learn to become self-reliant.

Lim Guan Eng told his Singaporean audience to visit and invest in Penang, even if more incidents of kidnap and blackmail occur in many Malaysian states compared to Singapore.

Rafidah Aziz used to tell the Europeans to use Malaysia as a gateway to the Asean economic region, now comprising almost 600 million people.

mahathir and umno 190508 02Dr Mahathir Mohamad once cried at an Umno general assembly and poured his heart into the now infamous 'perjuangan yang belum selesai' poem.

This past Sunday Star editorial headline read 'It's time to lift this veil of beguiling deceitfulness' referring to Tok Guru Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat's insistence on implementing udud law in Kelantan.

My teacher at GWU used to say, "A veil hides as much as it reveals!".

All truths often hurt to some degree. Equally, all political statements are only valid on the date of issue, according to my good friend Mohd Ibrahim Hashim.

What will it therefore take for Malaysians to demand that all leaders speak and communicate truth without guile but instead with honesty and sincerity? I am personally glad that Lim has apologised for his faux pas.

azlanI wish and pray that Nik Aziz will understand that his hudud thesis does not make rational sense under our federal constitution. We are a secular state, with some room for Islamic personal and family law, but only at the state level.

Famous author Steven Covey tells those who follow his '7 Habits' methodology for effective leadership to move from dependency towards interdependency. All Malaysians need to move out of their comfort zones under their coconut shell and their 'Kampung Malaysia' syndrome and to recognise that in this interdependent and inter-networked world, no land is an island only to them.

Malaysians need to move out of our dependency syndrome, where even historical facts taught in schools, but with different interpretive nuances, are considered too fearsome to change or challenge in a much changed world, where yesterday's heroes may be today's crooks.

To these childlike minds and hearts, there is only one truth and it belongs to their parents' version of truth, or whoever is their guardian of such truths. When one is totally dependent, one relies on another's value systems to define all truths about that single matter.

But according to Covey, one can move from dependence to independence, and then to interdependence. When one truly has an independent heart and mind, one is free to make choices and decisions in the circumstances that one faces. Such truths can redefine the meaning of life, and destiny.

For example, when I was 22 and in my first job, I decided to buy my first car, a Mini 1275 GT. When my father came to know about it much later, he was offended that I had not consulted him. His reason and rationale was that the family might have needed a bigger car for all to travel in. I lived and worked in KL and then in Sungai Petani. So, it might have also served that once a year use!

Mindset models

Are not most Malaysians today caught within a dependent mindset? We rely on the government and the mainstream media to tell us all about 'truth out there'. Most mainstream media also only tell 'their' truth because of their so-called independence from the government, even if owned and operated by political allies of the parties in power.

Really, are they truly independent? Are the opposition-owned organs any better bearers of 'truth out there'? Or, are they all more dependent or subservient to the home minister after many lost their licences within the Operasi Lalang atmosphere of fear in 1987? Do all Malaysians still live under the same fear epidemic in 2011?

Covey's third stage of mid-life maturity is what he calls interdependence. This is also what I believe NKRA minister Idirs Jala described last year at the UCSI Civil Society. His first two mindset foundations for national unity are 'tolerance and acceptance'. The third is 'celebrating diversity'.

If we apply both these three-stage mindset models about maturity to Malaysian lifestyles and psyche, maybe we could all learn something.

azlanFriday's NST headline - 'Johor Sultan: I'm offended!'- screamed that the ruler was upset with the name-calling about the state by Lim.

To his credit, the sultan (right) was not as terribly offended as his father sometimes was. In fact, the NST reported that, although offended, the sultan said "but I do not want to react, because as a ruler, I shouldn't be dragged into politics".

This, to me, reflects a classic Covey's mutual respect-based interdependence mindset. It would also reflect Idris' 'celebrating diversity mindset'.

All truth hurts; even more so, little or small truths with their non-transparent revelations. Words may sometimes hurt even more than physical pain. As the old adage goes: 'Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me'.

Today, in the language of psychology, this phenomena or the lack of it is called emotional quotient or EQ.

It is therefore my honest opinion and strong conviction that Malaysians of every ethnic heritage need to stop being dependent over silly and small issues, and learn to organise dialogues to better understand and appreciate such matters.

azlanMaybe Deputy Premier Muhyiddin Yassin (left) wants to hold a public dialogue with Lim about the matter of whether Johor is today better managed than Penang, and the police chief can be a speaker and give actual figures.

Then the simpler and irrelevant political rhetoric will stop and the real debate over issues can start. Civil society can even host this dialogue over such truth matters at some politically- neutral site.

I want to end this column with special recognition for the wise position taken by the sultan of Johor who recognises the interdependence between political systems and the royalty in Malaysia and therefore his unwillingness to be dragged into the fray, as has happened to lesser mortals among his counterparts in the past.

May God bless Malaysia.

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