

Weathering the perfect political storm

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"We are not victims, but time is running out, why waste it."
Michael Conley, founder of Storm Warnings.

A political website recently highlighted the Nouriel Roubini, (better known as "Dr Doom"), prediction that Malaysia will be hit by the Perfect Storm and implied that this time there would be no excuse such as pointing it to external factors.

To be more direct, we would have only ourselves to blame and we are "least able to do anything about it".

The perfect storm refers to a rare meteorological catastrophe occurring in such drastic magnitude that could not be contained.

This expression was first used in 1936 floods in the US affecting 17 states and resulting in 107 deaths.

Since then, meteorologists had gone into great lengths of trying to isolate the factors and examined the chains of circumstances which resulted in the event - considered impossible to avoid.

Human beings have challenged this impossible phenomenon. The term had been applied to environments besides weather, in the financial sector and politics as well as.

Economists, financial wizards, and management strategists alike have come up with storm warnings and guides on how to weather catastrophes of this nature.

Japanese meteorologist, Sakuhei Fujiwhara, observed and likened the event to "tropical storms dancing with each other around the dance floor of the ocean".

This method of analysis encouraged planners to break down the complexity of the events and to try to separately manage those controllable elements.

On the Malaysian "dance floor", the political parties may well be the prima donnas performing the current interplay to an audience of 12 million voters, needless to say, choreographed in anticipation of the forth coming GE13.

Dr. Doom pointed out that the storm would destroy the country economically and politically.

With the GE around the corner, avoiding the entire onslaught would not be easy. However, Malaysians, as peace-loving citizens, can still take steps to reduce the intensity of the outcome, and to cut down the number of casualties, if any.

We may not be able to convince all prima donnas to take off their dancing shoes.

However, as in disaster reduction planning, we can either focus on the residents in disaster prone areas for taking steps to relocate them.

Alternatively, the source of disaster could not be diverted away from them.

The last 12 months have seen the country going through various kinds of large public rallies involving thousands of individuals.

The organisers of these rallies all professed that the rallies would be peaceful and would last for merely an hour or two.

Some were carried out peacefully as planned and dispersed on time without any untoward events. But there were those that gave rise to subsequent accusations of violence of kinds.

From the participants' point of view, they rallied because it was their right - to create awareness of their pent up emotions.

The non-participants, however, asked, "What next?" Getting people of the new millennium to visualise material benefits from mere talk is easier said than done.

So much has been done by the BN government with real substantial benefits to the individuals and groups.

Like the hill-slope residents who once watched debris flowing through their living rooms, not many may still be around to watch a repeat of the same incidents.

Application of personal intelligence in evaluating risks and re-shaping of character among Malaysians could be one way in deciding how much of the perfect storm to be allowed to happen.

The recent dispute with the Chinese educators need to be addressed. Dong Zong has maintained its steadfast position as the creator and executor of the UEC examination for students of Chinese independent private schools since 1974.

MCA, on the other hand had not lived up to the community's expectations. The party was alleged of riding roughshod over getting approval for the Kuantan Chinese school.

Its subsequent arrogance, lack of transparency and petty name-calling of the Chinese academicians did not bridge the strained relationship.

It would require a group of Chinese academicians with deep understanding of both traditional and modern education needs to re-engage them into consultative mood. It is recommended that MCA leaves this highly-charged disaster scene.

Someone commanding community respect, and whom Dong Zong had been comfortable with, should be invited to restart the dialogue.

The outcome of the dialogue will greatly influence Chinese votes in the coming GE 13.

The political party recently published a manifesto with numbers printed in 46-point fonts. The purpose of using the bold writing was obvious - to shock the reader of the "crimes" of the establishment.

It has been more than six decades since Hitler used the loudness doctrine to convert people's belief.

As a researcher who regularly used development statistics, both local and international, I must say the level of the believability of these numbers triggered the critical thinkers to question them, one after another, assessing their inferences.

When inaccuracies or misrepresentations happen once too many times, integrity of the writers become doubtful. In fact the entire manifesto of the party would collide against a brick wall making it a laughing stock to the discerning.

Those who need protection are not the non-believers who busied in information gardens, rather those who found their dislodged trust turned into betrayal. There is no shortage of reminders of this kind from reports like "Arab Spring at One" , "Syria Towards the Endgame".... and the like.

Like the upstream residents in the famous Taiwan disaster reduction project, by understanding the Fujihara effect, acting on warnings and putting in efforts to prevent the debris from flowing downstream, there is still time to avoid the perfect storm.

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