

Racism and a blueprint for rebuilding Malaysia

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COMMENT Although many things remain uncertain after the GE13 result, one thing is unarguably clear... Malaysia is in trouble.

Who is in trouble? Not Pakatan, not BN to my mind... we are. We... the rakyat.

Our children are in trouble and yes, theirs too, in the distant future if we do not stop this juggernaut called...racism.

I would like to outline my basic blueprint for rebuilding this country with the special focus of eliminating racism as its main objective.

My programme may be 'shocking' or 'unusual' but it has the virtue of never been thought off or tried.

In architectural design training, the best design ideas are usually the 'shockers'!

I have been trained to understand the box but never to stay long in it and to always leave it on the front porch...well, most of the time.

My programme or blueprint can be easily implemented by BN...if it wants to, if it has the heart, the will and intelligence to.

NONEBut if it is still sore what with statements like; 'leave the country' or 'sodomising minds' and 'Chinese Tsunami', then I would assume that it is disinterested to resolve the problem of racism in this country. Point blank.

Now if the minority BN government does not want to implement the programme, will the majority Pakatan form its own shadow cabinet and pool their financial resources to implement this programme?

In the first place, I have to ask Pakatan leaders a point blank question: Are you guys actually interested in resolving our dreaded racism issue?

I have followed very closely political events in this country from 1997, and after all that Anwar and Pakatan have gone through...I still have a small lingering doubt.

In my academic reading, Pakatan is simply a strong coalition built to fight one

single enemy.

Which enemy? Racism? Religious intolerance? Poverty? Nope...just BN.

I am generalising of course but I am using my poetic license to make this simple point that racism will still not go away if Pakatan now sits in Putrajaya.

Why do I say so? Because I have not witnessed a single paper by Pakatan to seriously look at the problem of racism.

Now if Pakatan, too, seems disinterested to rebuild Malaysia, then it is up to the third political force, the rakyat via the machinery of NGOs like Bersih and the Islamic Renaissance Front to take matters into our own hands.

My philosophy is simple...if you believe in something; you just have to do it yourself.

Then come the next election we, the rakyat, will throw both parties out and rule in a different way.

How? Think out of the box-lah.

Nice words

Now, before outlining my programme, allow me to say a few nice words about BN.

Not the present BN but the old founding fathers of BN.

judiciary forum lingam tape 171107 salleh abbasYes...the one before former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the sacking of Salleh Abbas (right).

To be fair Umno, MCA and MIC have done a great service to this country by successfully working with one another amicably and providing peace and prosperity for three decades.

When I stand amidst 2,000 academics at UTM hall with easily 90% Malay Muslim scholars, I would say BN deserves an A-.

Why A minus? Must subtract a very strong minus for 1969 May 13.

Now let's be clear the A- is for the BN before Mahathir.

The post Mahathir BN deserves a failing grade and the grade for a post GE13 BN is a letter and level of failure that I can't find low enough.

Why have I given a failed grade to Mahathir's BN when we have shiny tall buildings, and a New Putrajaya kingdom with a massive crystal mosque?

Because this was when basic human decency and dignity was violated.

Operasi Lalang, the Memali bloodshed, the Tun Salleh Abbas sacking, The Anwar 'kangaroo' Trial, The Anwar second sodomy case, The dubious sexually explicit videos and above all else the death of many innocent children in the National Service.

Fail. E-, F, X, whatever.

It is my academic reading that this nation has lost its citizen's honor and respect.

How can that compare to BRIM and the Tall Two Towers of Petronas or the Splendour of Putra Mosque?

Allah The Most High sent all his prophets to teach about the dignity and humaneness of man to treat one another with love and compassion.

Allah The Most Beneficent, needs no RM600 million mosque.

So, in summation, BN was a great blessing then, but now it is becoming an entity that would dismantle what its own forefathers built.

In principle, there is nothing absolutely wrong with the political concept of BN...its present leaders show no qualities comparable to the leaders of old.

Right, so now comes my programme. Remember...I am not a social scientist, nor a super management guru but just a guy with a Phd in architecture, 40 books to my name, hundreds of encyclopedia entries, hundreds of media articles and a fondness for reading how to get close to god from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist perspectives, as well as freethinkers.

This is my take and my priority in dealing with racism.

Retrain the ustaz

First and foremost, I would like to retrain 50 ustaz or religious teachers for six

months on a single message; Islam abhors, rejects and can never tolerate racism in any form, action or even thought.

Pakistan imposes syariah law religious school studentsThe ustaz will be taught in class, at the temples, churches and houses of people from various races and religions.

Upon graduation, they will be the light that will realign the Muslim Malay mindset.

Why have I made the ustaz my top priority? I have listened to thousands of sermons, CDs, cassettes and ceramah to know that the ustaz and the content of their lectures and sermons have contributed greatly to the polarisation of this country.

My second priority is education.

I have already written extensively about vernacular schools and the national curriculum.

Just to sum up, there are just two points.

First, if we are to keep the vernacular schools and religious madrasah, then there must be a no-nonsense policy that the children must have a 'year out' at the primary and the secondary level at a national school.

Second point is that the national school curriculum must be revamped so that cultural and religious needs of non-Malay Muslim students must also be strictly adhered to.

Exchange some of the content of science, maths, history, geography and Bahasa Malaysia for cultural studies and religious understanding.

There will be teachers teaching Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism in the national curriculum.

My third priority is my Hijra Children Concept which I wrote about in Malaysiakini some time ago.

In sum, I called for volunteer parents of 14 year olds and 16 year old sons to come forth and exchange their children with a family of a different race and culture for a period of three months.

In this way not only the children will get to interact with different people in Malaysia, the parents can also interact with the relatives of other culture related to the adopted child.

This is a very important programme because of its direct social implications.

national service weapon training 220905 registration
Fourthly, I would personally dismantle the National Service, kick out all military personnel and reorganise the camps into fun filled summer camps concept of 2 weeks with 50 percent Malays and 50 percent non-Malays on a voluntary participatory method.

There will be no military style program but more of games, talks, art and craft and service to the community visitation to temples, churches and mosques.

Fifthly, I would reorganise Dewan Bahasa and split it into one which still concentrate on developing knowledge in Bahasa Melayu but the other entity must publish books about our different cultures and religions in the Malay, Chinese and Indian languages.

The books should be about rituals, customs, religions and traditions.

Sixth, I would concentrate on our teachers in secondary and primary schools.

The teachers have to be retrained like the Ustaz but in a one month course where they learn in class but also get close to the multi-ethnic parties.

Seventh is a programme for university students.

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The students must be retrained to understand that cultural understanding is paramount in business management as well as in public relations.

Regardless of whatever profession students target these two skills are necessary for confident career advancement or prospects.

The eighth programme is what I call the 'Personal touch'.

In the age of mobile phones, fast internet and everything on a tight schedule, we must go back to the simple days of laid back talking, eating and plain old socialising.

All politicians, high ranking officials should take off one weekend every four months to pick from a preselected family of a different race and live with them and

participate in the family, religious and social rituals.

Leaders must come down to earth once in a while...or for a number of whiles in fact, to rediscover the true meaning of humility, tenderness and simple caring.

All these human traits seem to have disappeared in front of the LCD screen.

Inter-cultural exchange

At UTM School of Architecture, in the measured drawing programme where students have to measure and record the history of heritage buildings, they would have to stay for a month with the families that own the houses and the community which surround it.

The inter-cultural exchange is a by-product that I found most beneficial and important.

NONEThere you have it. My simple blueprint. Call it naïve, strange or even ridiculous.

But this is my honest reading of what has happened in Malaysia and how I think might return us back to a nation with a serious and humane conscience and minus racism and religious intolerance.

If BN and Pakatan is disinterested, then Malaysians of all walk of life with the help of NGOs can raise funds and organise ourselves to do what must be done for our children's future.

Racism in Malaysia will never disappear and having certain parties purposely, accidentally or even naively perpetrating mistrust between the races will not help the situation change.

The fate of our nation lies with the few citizens who still have a conscience, hope and the vision to see Malaysia in a new light.

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