

## **Is #TN50 another decoy like '1Malaysia'?**

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When Najib Abdul Razak first proposed the creation of a nation state through 1Malaysia in 2010, I was one of the first persons to compliment him for his audacity in embracing national unity despite coming from a race-based party.

I thought it was an honest signal that we were going to transition into a new era of politics. One of unity and good governance. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out that way. We saw race-baiting optimised for one's political interest. We were home to the most complex money-laundering scandal in human history. In summary, Najib's administration worked in opposition to the ideals of 1Malaysia.

Regardless, the slogan was used in almost every speech made by a government representative. It became a nationwide phenomenon with buildings imprinted with its logo, schools forced to debate and discuss about it and public policies coated with the 1Malaysia ideals.

While all of these took place, the government still failed to remove the Sedition Act. The government still suppressed student activism in universities. Worse, the government pedestals ethnic demagogues like Mohd Ali Baharom (Ali Tinju) and Jamal Md Yunus. In the end, the 1Malaysia slogan remained as a mere slogan and nothing else. The soul and idealism which it carried were drained out by the hypocrisy of the government.

After the failure of the grand 1Malaysia slogan, we now have a new slogan to fill in the obvious vacuum, #TN50. Like its predecessor, it might be well-intentioned by some, but the creators of the slogan have had a history of alleged corruption and abuse of power which taints its very existence.

#TN50 intends to solicit feedback from average Malaysians on what Malaysia should be like in 2050. It specifically emphasises on the need to be more youth-focused. However like its predecessor, the ideals often never translate into concrete actions.

For a start, it is exceptionally ironic that the very same administration which claims to want to listen to the voices of the Youth has also suppressed the very same voices which it purportedly wants to represent. Anis Syafiqah Mohd Yusof and the UM4 student leaders were fined and suspended for speaking up against corruption.

Hanif Mahpa and Afiqah Zolkeple from Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) Malaysia were suspended for merely hosting an intellectual debate in the university on the pros and cons of the Goods and Services Tax. Just recently, we were informed that UM students who held up placards in protest at the 1MDB scandal will face disciplinary action. The list continues.

## **Suppressing dissenting voices?**

How can the #TN50 operationalise when its creators are hell-bent on suppressing the voices of those who are not in line with the ruling regime? How can #TN50 truly be representative when it also factors in the voices of those who side the government while sidelining if not punishing dissenters. “Speak to me young ones, but only speak on issues which I permit”, say those in power.

Even if a free market of ideas is successfully created, will the government listen and translate suggestions into actions? Have we forgotten about the recommendations made by the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) to the government? Have we forgotten about the recommendations made by multiple ad hoc committees/councils/groups set up by the Malaysian government?

Have we forgotten about the promise to set aside the Sedition Act and uphold the rule of law? The list continues. As the Malay proverb goes, “masuk telinga kiri, keluar telinga kanan”. The track record speaks for itself.

It therefore becomes clear that #TN50 is a decoy to distract Malaysians from talking about the real elephant in the room known as 1MDB and structural corruption. Someone who has lost legitimacy by being embroiled in one of the world’s largest corruption scandals should not be given the trust to craft the future of Malaysia. Fellow Malaysians, do not fall into this trap again.

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