

LETTER | Hope is still alive in Malaysians

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LETTER | I am writing in response to the rather bleak letter by Ramesh Rajaratnam titled “Malaysians no longer want change”.

I share his disappointments and frustrations,, looking at the reality and the lot of lingering leaders in this so-called government of the day.

In his frustration, Ramesh concluded that the rakyat no longer seek change and even the urban Malays have given up hope because many supposedly are migrating. Those who can afford should leave and those who cannot and have “no choice” are the only ones who will stay.

Call me a hopeless optimist but I actually see bright dawn on the horizon as the storm clouds begin to blow away. This ray of light that peeks through the dark storm clouds in the early morning sun is the idealism and collective hopes of the young people of Malaysia.

I never knew they existed until I heard them sing the songs of angry men on the streets of Kuala Lumpur in the middle of a maddening pandemic. What is so different about this crowd of young Malaysians?

They were led by Malaysians! Not Chinese Malaysians or Malay Malaysians or Indian Malaysians but young, hopeful Malaysians who stood up for what they believed was right and who showed compassion to those who were suffering from the pandemic.

Apart from organising the Lawan rally, there was the white flag initiative and scores of other various programmes to feed the hungry and to care for the sick that cared not for the colour of one's skin.

What Ramesh failed to see, as did many who were excited to see the new government in 2018, was that the battle for Malaysia didn't only begin that year. It started much earlier, in 1998, and some would contend with me that it even began before Reformasi.

The Pakatan Harapan government was the result of a 20-year struggle by many who gave up their freedom, their careers and even their lives. To the surprise of many, it wasn't because of an old man who had an axe to grind with the infamous prime minister who is known as a world-class kleptocrat.

The truth is, just as Eustace found out in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it was a painful and a tedious affair in peeling off the scales but “the only thing that made me able to bear it was the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off”.

“You know - if you’ve ever picked the scab off a sore place. It hurts like billy-oh but it is such fun to see it coming away,” Eustace said.

Tyranny and corruption and institutional racism cannot disappear after having been around for over 60 years but it is peeling off bit by bit and like a dried scab, the ideology of race-based politics will soon disappear with the exit of these old Umno relics.

Look at Pakatan Harapan today. It has had the experience of being in government with young and brilliant minds committed to a better Malaysia.

To name a few - Hannah Yeoh who has been the voice of justice for women and children and has accomplished more in those 22 months than BN did in 20 years; Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman and his then deputy in the Youth and Sports Ministry Steven Sim; Yeo Bee Yin who stood up to the Australians who were dumping waste for decades in Malaysia and Ong Kian Ming who was deputy minister for international trade and industry.

You have tested leaders like Nurul Izzah Anwar and Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad. Capable elders like Dzulkefly Ahmad who showed his leadership through the pandemic and many more who stand steadfast behind the leadership of PKR president Anwar Ibrahim, who was at the centre of Reformasi in 1998.

So, you see, if we look at the bigger picture, it has been a battle for Malaysia and as Rome wasn't built in a day; neither is the new Malaysia. But to abandon her now is throwing all the sacrifices, sweat and blood of those who fought in the last two decades, together with the hopes and dreams of tomorrow's Malaysians.

Let us sing to the end the songs of angry men:

"It is the music of the people

Who will not be slaves again!

When the beating of your heart

Echoes the beating of the drums

There is a life about to start

When tomorrow comes."

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