

**One step forward for Malay intellectual development**  
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COMMENT The last month or so must have been a milestone of sorts in Malay intellectual development.

For one, consider Sir Richard Branson the founder of the 'Virgin' brand in credit cards, to airlines and music "megastores". He has made the comment that Malaysia's once attractive investment climate has been tarnished by the rule of law becoming the rule of men.

For two, consider also Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia. He stated that the censorship of information and knowledge is harmful to the people's and country's well being.

Now these are no ordinary fellows. They are very influential world-class citizens. Their actual and proven contribution to the development, progress, welfare and well-being of the entire human civilization is beyond measure. We should be grateful for their freely and sincerely made comments and wisdom about us.

At around the same time PM Najib Abdul Razak addressed the United Nations. He was giving a sermon to the world community saying that the world has no place for racism and religious extremism.

Najib's theme fits well with the wisdom and counsel of the two great men.

For one, racism and extremism are toxic to any country's health and well-being. For two, they can be overcome by education in turn brought about by a free flow of information and knowledge; and by a healthy investment climate.

It's timely too. In this case we know that Najib is embarking on NEM requiring RM1.4 trillion in ten years most of which projected to come from abroad. Translation: Wales and Branson's free counselling in other words should be worth at least this much to him.

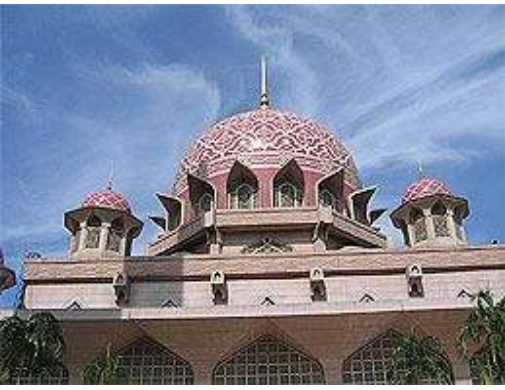


Jim Wales has given him the impetus and encouragement to have a closer look at the archaic and sickening information, communication and knowledge control system and apparatus that Najib's (*left*) predecessors have been practising all this while. So Najib will have to listen and act accordingly. He has to take heed.

Mouth watering suggestion

The crux of the matter is that censorship tampers with truth. Let the human intellect determine what is 'truth'. The human intellect works well in conditions of free flow and total freedom. So Najib must get rid of all impediments to free flow of information and knowledge.

In the immediate practical terms he must thereby cease the blatant and indiscriminate banning of books (the latest being Kim Quek's *March to Putrajaya* and Zunar's *Cartoon-o-phobia*) for any reason, and stop this idea of mass media control including the Internet. For example the idea of controlling or banning *Twitter* should be best forgotten.



In the longer term Najib must widen the mental horizon of the average Malay so as to be comparable and competitive in the international arena once more. He must break open the closed mind of the Malays.

Branson (*right*) has given Najib the situation to re-evaluate some laws that are contrary to the spirit and functions of democracy and human

rights. Branson says that the present Sodomy 2 is a case in point.

I add to that by saying that only in a developed democracy with full application of universal human rights and the rule of law can racism and religious extremism can be contained. And, only in a country with minimal racism and religious bigotry can international trade and investments can thrive.

Also, only in an open democracy can the country's laws be fairly applied. For example in this country the law says everyone has freedom of religious belief, so this must be fairly implemented. Right now the government's religion policies are very lopsided.

My own detractors who do not believe me can just see where new temples and churches are found - in between shop lots, housing estates and in factory areas.

Compare these with the many ornate and ostentatious many state mosques that seem to be in every virtual prime location. Consequently the unity of the people is split into the Muslims and non-Muslims.

Najib must likewise deal with laws that tarnish democracy and human rights. For example the OSA is devoid of transparency, and this law is thereby 'bad'. So Najib should seize this opportunity to chop it off the books.

The ISA has little responsibility, it's more oppression and application of fear, an abuse of power. So chop it off as well. There are many other laws like the PPPA that should be expunged without any further delay.

Unique way of testing sentiment

But why has it been that Najib made his statement not within the borders of the country that he leads, but more generally and rhetorically in the august halls of the UN?

Speculations are plenty, and I'd like to make my say. It would give Najib adequate insurance cover. So should his message not be accepted well by the people back home, by the likes of Ibrahim Ali and his mentors at Perkasa for example, Najib can have the turn around comfort of saying that his statement has been 'taken out of context' or 'misquoted by the Jewish-controlled media', both favourite disclaimers used by Malaysian politicians.

It's so funny that Najib has to test the sentiments of his own local market in a faraway city.

To be sure Najib has a lot of critics - the product of the very same prevailing information and knowledge control. Take the case of a blogger calling himself '*Aku Melayu*' commenting on Branson's advice:

"What this barbarian meant is that Malaysia should accept sodomy as something which is a

holy act. Well Sir Richard, as long as Malaysia is governed by the BN, your wish will never come true. Come again another time. Maybe when/if PR rules your wish is their command". (*Malaysiakini*, Sept 17).

This comment speaks volumes of the mental state of this blogger and by extension the generic *Ketuanan Melayu* mind. I'd just mention a few relevant items.

Firstly, this guy does not even have the courtesy to reveal his own name. He fights for his cause in the comforts of anonymity. He has no courage of his convictions. He is to me an intellectual coward.

Secondly he refers to Branson as a barbarian. Wow, this is cool. A great world-class business leader is called a barbarian by one person who does not even have the decency and courage to reveal his name!

Thirdly this attack on the person of Branson is a favourite denial tactic of (Malay) politicians i.e. by attacking and undermining the credibility of a person who carries perceived bad and unsavoury news. In other words attack the messenger, ignore the message. Who is ever interested in issues and principles anyway!

Fourthly anything the ruling party does is right and Very Right. The ruling party is never wrong. It's lack of intellectualism, of human rationality clearly shows.

In fact people like *Aku Melayu* will never ever get to realise there can be other alternative understanding to any issue. They can never be educated, never learn, incapable to look at things in fresh and new ways. They are destined to remain what and where they are, conservatives and conformists.

They are persons with a closed mind, intellectual cowards, stuck in one dark irrelevant corner of the world, while crying foul to anything and everything that passes them by.

It is people like *Aku Melayu* who Najib must as a matter of importance and urgency try to educate.

Beyond strengthening good laws and repealing bad ones as suggested above the least he could do now is to hail the appointment of Hata Wahari as the new National Union of Journalists (NUJ) president.

Through responsible journalism, I can see that Hata (*right*) and the NUJ can do a lot to streamline the flow of information, dissemination of knowledge, open the people's mind and by extension improve the country's investment climate - exactly what Wales and Branson have given counsel and Najib wants to do.

But Hata Wahari is from *Utusan Malaysia*, this national daily that spews racist and extremist sentiments virtually daily. He has revealed to us that his employer has indeed been nasty and mischievous in this area.

He might soon get into trouble with his own employer and the promise that he brings might just die a natural death; another collateral damage (to borrow Najib's words) in the



annals of Malay and Malaysian social economic and political development.

So now Najib, please do your best to enable the NUJ do their thing. They are trying to assist you to lead the country to great heights.

Should they and you succeed then it's a win-win situation for you, them and the country. We can even claim that the Malay mind has moved that much forward.

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