

Mobilising moderate Malaysia
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PM Najib
Abdul

Razak (*below*) argued at the UN that the mainstream moderate majority must be mobilised to reflect and protect universal values of common day civility. He repeated the same call at the Asem Meetings in Brussels.

Coincidentally, Raja Petra Kamaruddin (RPK) also made the same call in London at a Friends of PR event; calling for the more significant role of the Third Force in Malaysian politics.

Actually these two leaders agree on the strategy forward for their nation. The only difference is that one is the leader of the formal system working within the UN system of nation-states and the other a civil

society leader working via informal networks within his own country. One is elected, the other anointed by a specific calling.

It is good that they do actually agree on something. That allows and promotes a common ground for a virtuous dialogue on how to grow a 1Malaysia into a Bangsa Malaysia.

The current problem in Malaysia though, and actually anywhere in the world in the Global Village of McLuhan, is that the public interest does not seem to be the responsibility of anyone in particular any more.

Too many people and the large majority are only interested in their pet agendas and very few have interest in the common grounds of the public interest. These used to be called the commons. Today even the public service functions focus on rationalising their self-survival and existence rather than serving the public interest.

Let me quote a real-life example. This morning as I went walking I came across two young Malaysians on a motorbike at a traffic light. I stopped as I was crossing the lights and asked them their ages. One was ten and the other eight.

I asked who gave them permission to be on the road. The older one replied that he was only going to buy things for his mother from a grocery shop. I asked him if he knew the law. He simply looked down and pretended that "I should close one eye on the matter, presumably while waiting for the light to change."

I instructed him to turn around and go home or I would report him to the police. He did turn around and I pray that he went home and never rides the motorbike illegally again. But, please do not hold your breath!

Whose responsibility is it?

Whose responsibility is it then to make sure that "our public space morality is not violated in casual ways?" Whose responsibility is it to make sure that "young boys like these do not become the Aminulrasyids of the world who consequently get killed after a police chase?" Is

it then only the responsibility of the police to monitor and enforce such public space morality? What is the role and responsibility of the average Malaysian moderate mainstream human being?

The grand mufti of Syria who spoke on 'The challenges of the 21st century Muslims' at the Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies also had this reminder to all his listeners. By his definition and articulation, all Malaysians and all human beings, not just Muslims, faced the same set of challenges in the 21st century.

His talk was refreshing and very inclusive. I left encouraged that there are great Muslim leaders like him who are moderates and are speaking for the large majority. He also challenged me to review my rather limited views on some aspects of universality.

Furthermore, the PM at the launch of the Razak School of Government (RSOG) at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) recently while making the inaugural 'Razak Perdana Lectures' argued that there are four benchmarks for public service, if Malaysia does not want to become a failed state.

The Prime Minister argued that "world class leadership was not merely about leading but also about inspiring others to follow suit. It required the ability to make the right decision on informed reasoning and an outcome-driven mentality." Such a mentality had four benchmarks. They are:

1. Through ensuring transparency and accountability, such leadership must provide for the demands and expectations of the public but also include them in decision-making processes.
2. Learning to be receptive to change such leadership must make competitiveness their second nature. Competition is the only way for self-improvement.
3. Merit-based advancement within the civil service should be based on individual capacity and potential.
4. Lifelong learning must become a way of life for our public service.

Again, the grand mufti and Najib said similar things although focused on different issues and concerns. Najib concluded with the statement that the nation needed to have a society-centric government, where the peoples' voice is heard by the civil service and wherein listening is the most accurate assessor of the ability of the public services and her performance.

Role of third parties

RPK argued had that his 'party in England' was instrumental for insisting on public sector reforms through their moderated hung Parliament negotiations. RPK's argument was also that it was civil society made up of NGOs, Bloggers United, ordinary citizens and academics with integrity that were the third force in the last general election of March 8.

He cautioned and warned that if the PKR leadership refused to keep the Barisan Rakyat manifesto (the words are a coinage by the combination of Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat) this would be the last GE wherein the Third Force would support PKR.

During my last Intan course for promotions, I wrote a paper on the need for a Citizen-led Action Movement or CLAM in 1999. In fact, I even took a half-day off to present the paper to the then Deputy IGP, a very good friend from Sarawak and former First College mate in

UM. He commented that I sounded like an NGO; although while still in the public service of the government. I retorted that was why I had taken a half-day off just to meet up with him.

As argued by the grand mufti of Syria, Najib and RPK (*left in pic*) the modern world needs a third force of influence which will articulate moderate and good civic values of a universal nature to collaborate and work for the common ground issues and concerns.



Unlike with the "use of force" this movement must be a knowledge-based civil society engagement with values of a universal nature and agreed to by all faith systems in the world. The world has no other real choice. May God bless Malaysia to choose this path of righteousness and the way of a virtuous cycle of prosperity; without begging our neighbour.

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