

Khairy warns of Umno losing power
Malaysiakini.com
October 21, 2010

Below is an abstract of the speech given by Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin at the party's 2010 general assembly.

In Manek Urai, Bagan Pinang and Hulu Selangor, voting patterns in young voter streams revealed a shift in the acceptance among young voters to Umno and BN.

In Hulu Selangor for instance, we won 30 young voter streams in the by-election compared to just 11 in 2008. There are, of course, a number of factors contributing to this change. Nonetheless, these results show resurgence in the support for Umno and BN, a development made possible by Umno Youth's efforts to win them over.

We should recognise that come the next general elections, it is estimated that young voters will account for 80 percent or almost three million of new voters, and that the proportion of their votes will increase from 41 percent in the 12th General Election to 49 percent in the 13th General Election.

This is in line with our research, which found that 75 percent of young people qualified to vote do plan to exercise that right in the coming election. At the same time, our research also showed that 62 percent of these young voters are fence-sitters who will cast their votes based on the party and candidate they feel is best.

We must accept the fact that young voters today are able to distinguish between mere rhetoric and genuine service, between elaborate pretensions and sincere efforts.

Young people no longer appreciate politics reliant on rhetoric, demonstrations, lodging police reports and urging the government to arrest anyone who does not share our political beliefs, although such politics may still be appropriate in certain contexts. In all likelihood, such politics will only serve to drive them further away from us.

The rise of the youth vote demands a new approach and direction.

In being committed and steadfast in understanding and championing aspirations of the youth, we also propose that the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 be amended to allow university students to be actively involved in politics. What is the point of us trumpeting that young people are important assets and future leaders if their wish to involve themselves politics is denied and met with scorn?

As the Umno president said, the era of "government knows best" is over. In the past, we may have asked young people to be thankful for all the development brought about by Umno and BN. I recall my days as a university student, constantly reminded to feel precisely that sense of gratitude to Umno and BN.

It is not that young people today are not grateful to previous generations or that they do not understand history, but they do not wish to be held hostage to it.

While the younger generation should be reminded of dark moments in our history such as the May 13 riots, but they will not stand for scare tactics or political blackmailing in the form of telling them that any deviation from the government's wishes would lead to another May

13 episode. It is in the nature of the young, that attempts to coerce them into anything do not bode well and are likely to invite rebellion.

Undoubtedly, there is a time and place for force and authority to be applied especially when national security is at risk from terrorists and extremists. But for us to act with force upon every statement that tests the limits of our patience will certainly not solve the problem. We might be able to arrest one or two, but what of the hundreds of thousands of their supporters? In the end, disaster may befall us for in our obsession with winning the battle, we may end up losing the war.

What is required today is a politics based on thoughts and ideas. The current political sphere is no longer entirely about the struggle for power, but a competition of minds, a battle of ideas. Like it or not, those who challenge our political ideology must be defeated through the sharpness of our intellect and the superiority of our arguments, not by relying on executive power.

Young people today increasingly relish political choices that appeal to their cognitive abilities. The spread of information through social media such as Facebook and Twitter is now a choice over traditional mass media. There are close to 8.5 million Facebook users in Malaysia, of which 84 percent are 35 years old or younger.

Their thoughts are not shaped by statements or comments by ministers in Buletin Utama or Warta Perdana but by excerpts from YouTube that cannot be controlled or influenced. The world of young people is incredibly different - today, that world is a cyber-world; a world filled with information and interaction 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As such, engagement with them must take into account a more critical thought process and perspective compared to before. We can no longer shove lopsided propaganda down their throats. We must practice an inclusive culture that appreciates participation of youths and teenagers; and no longer a top down political culture.

Young people have a sense of idealism and of their own opinions; the way to winning them over is to include them directly in the process of nation building.

Maintain objectives, but change approach

In my maiden policy address as Umno Youth leader, I touched on the future of Malays and bumiputeras. Of late, there have been voices asserting that Umno no longer protects the interests of Malays and bumiputeras. They allege that a preoccupation with national concerns has caused the Malay agenda to be sidelined. Other groups, who do not have to strike a balance between communal aspirations and national interest seek to capitalise by positioning themselves as heroes of the Malays.

In the midst of such concerns, I stand before you today to stress in no uncertain terms that the Malay and bumiputera agenda will never ever be separated from Umno and most certainly not from the Umno Youth movement. The fact remains that Umno was formed to struggle for the rights and voice of the Malays. As such, even with the passage of time and a changing political landscape, our principal struggle and heart of our politics still beat the same rhythm as our forebearers.

The question of whether Umno is the one true platform to fight for the future of Malays should not even arise. Then, now and forever Umno is the haven, the shield and Umno is the party that will continue the struggle for religion, people and country.



The question that arises should not be about the aim of our struggle. Without being emotional, we must be bold enough to separate between purpose and method. We must understand the difference between the *maqasid* or objectives of a struggle and the *manhaj* or the approach employed to

that end.

The transformation needed does not concern the *maqasid*. The goal of elevating the Malays will never be forgotten much less cast aside. What needs to be changed is the *manhaj* or the way things have been done thus far.

Some may question, does the *manhaj* require changing? Is this not the approach that brought about all the successes we enjoy today? Specifically speaking, is it not the New Economic Policy that is the main source of Malay progress and Malaysia's political stability today? Why should we seek for change, even if just to the *manhaj* and not the *maqasid* if the methods have proven successful for the bumiputeras? Why fix something that is not broken?

Personally, I view the achievements of the NEP as something to be proud of. Apart from the economic progress, to date national harmony has been preserved due to the effectiveness of the NEP in alleviating poverty for all Malaysians irrespective of race, alongside restructuring society to eliminate the divide based on an identification of race with economic activity. NEP reduced the incidence of hardcore poverty in the country from 50 percent in the 1970s to 4 percent currently, while the figure for bumiputeras fell from 65 percent to 5 percent.

The efforts of restructuring society through the NEP has produced a commercial and industrial society as well as a class of bumiputera professionals. These successes cannot be denied. But for any policy - even that which has been so instrumental to the Malays like the NEP - there will be weaknesses. Moreover, any policy needs re-examination after implementation over a lengthy period of time so as to take into consideration and reflect changes over time.

On this issue, we need to be honest and not let emotions get the better of us. Let it not be that simply wanting to reexamine an approach or the *manhaj* of the agenda for Malays invites the charge of being a traitor. Let it not be that wanting to improve the efficacy of the policy or identify weaknesses in the implementation of NEP, leads to Malays being incited that the BN government apparently no longer cares about the Malay agenda.

Neither should young Malays today be scared into thinking that Malays will, as it were, disappear off the face of the earth simply because the *manhaj* or approach to our struggle is modified for better achievements.

If we are sincere and truly want to achieve the *maqasid* - the objective, the aim - of our struggle, i.e. a bumiputera community that attains progress and success through its own strengths and endeavour, then we must be bold enough to acknowledge whatever weaknesses there are in our approach.

When the New Economic Model was announced, many expressed concern that the Malay agenda had seemingly disappeared as an obsolete notion that has no place in a borderless world. Malays felt threatened and immediately assumed we were under siege, to the extent that a well-meaning exercise to re-examine the implementation of policies was viewed with

suspicion and seen as another attempt to chip away at the rights and special position of the bumiputeras.

If all we are is defensive and all we are able to do is proclaim words seemingly to defend this or that, will the bumiputeras continue to progress? Do Malays become special only by virtue of shouting about the Malay special position? Are we to believe that simply warning certain pressure groups against playing with fire, the bumiputeras will suddenly succeed? Or in reality have we been led by our emotions to the point where we lost sight of the principal issue?

What we must do is acknowledge the weaknesses that exist and build a new concept that can elevate the status of bumiputeras to a level we can be proud of. The NEP has certainly brought many successes but it does have its failings. Bumiputera equity has risen compared to the pre-NEP era, but at a time when economic growth was at its greatest in the 1990s when was ample space for redistribution of that newfound wealth, bumiputera equity fell from 20.6 percent in 1995 to 19.1 percent in 1999.

We further witnessed the increase in the ratio of bumiputera to ethnic Chinese incomes from RM1.74 to ethnic Chinese for every RM1 to ethnic Malays in 1990 to RM1.81 in 1995.

During that period, we saw many Malay millionaires given great opportunities and brought to the fore through privatisation programmes and ownership of shares via 'pink forms'. Unfortunately, the shares allocated to bumiputeras to increase the community's equity position were sold because some wanted a quick buck, the luxurious bungalow, the Mercedes, the young wife more becoming of their newfound status. With the sudden riches that fell on their lap, they could not remain grounded.

The gifts given in trust, that were supposed to be the means of assisting the rest of the community who had yet to benefit in any way, were in the end hoarded to become theirs alone. The immense greed that took over made them forget the greater good. The NEP's aim to create many more successful Malay corporate tycoons following the success of the chosen ones, was left unfulfilled, due to the voracity that blinded them and preceded their responsibility towards their people.

These are but some of the leakages and problems that weakened the implementation of the NEP, the old *manhaj*. By right, with all the power and policies on our side, the Malays should not have to speak about the question of quotas today. For after so long, the Malays should already be able to stand on our own two feet and pass the 30 percent equity target, achieving income levels at par with other ethnic communities as well as successfully exploring high value economic sectors. Unfortunately, we have to admit that none of these have been achieved.

As Umno Youth leader, I meet many young Malays from all levels of society. When I speak of the NEP and the Malay struggle, they retort: "Pardon me, but what have I ever received from the NEP?" Their incomes are below the poverty line, many of them have migrated to cities where the cost of living rises faster than what they earn. These are Malays, bumiputeras, but they have never enjoyed the fruits of the NEP. Their perception is that the NEP only enriches a few elite bumiputeras with strong political links.

For these youths, the 30 percent equity target does not mean anything because most of them never have and never will be able to purchase shares. This is yet another example of leakages where the NEP, which was rooted on the notion of prosperity for all, ended up being seen as an elitist policy resulting in many Malays sidelined and not looked after.



This reality demands that we make changes. We must be clear that the New Economic Model does not sideline the Malay agenda. What it does is update the implementation methods to overcome the weaknesses of the NEP. Why should we be afraid of an economic agenda based on merit? Why should we be concerned when those who have the capabilities, who are genuine, are given the opportunity to move forward? Are we so poisonously envious of our own people who work hard and are talented that we are willing to deny them of success? Are we like crabs in a pot, clawing one another down?

Based on merit and needs

The new *manhaj* must be guided by merit and needs. Merit stresses on staying power and competitiveness. Merit means the Malay who has the ability, talent and high potential will be discovered, assisted along the way and given ample room to succeed. Merit also demands a level-playing field so that the most innovative of farmers, the most diligent of traders, the most knowledgeable of professors and the most competent of contractors are provided with all the encouragement necessary without barriers in the form of political interests or the lack political connections.

God-willing, with the inculcation of these new values and culture in the *manhaj* of empowerment for our people, the Malays will be better equipped to compete on the world stage, without the need for 'crutches' anymore.

The principle of need means that the poorest citizens with no hope of having their welfare met except by the government, are never left behind. For young people who feel they have not received the fruits of the NEP thus far, the New Economic Model must raise their status. The income gap, whether between or within any given race, must be reduced.

There is no point in us talking about a high income nation if the rich get richer and the poor remain in despair. The New Economic Model guided by the principle of need will ensure all left behind by the old approach will be represented this time.

What it all boils down to, is about methods and goals. Umno Youth is the hope of our people - then, now, forever. But what we hope for our people is real success and genuine advancement. We want to introduce a new narrative for Malays that is not only focused on defending rights, position and privileges. We need a bolder narrative to achieve unfulfilled success.

Let us acknowledge and recognise that the new narrative does not in any way change our purpose. What we need to emphasise is how bumiputeras can be empowered, through the renewal of a Malay agenda that is more fresh and relevant. Today, we push aside the old *manhaj* that has not produced comprehensive success and embrace a new approach grounded on merit and need that will build Malay capability and capacity without impinging on the nation's economic vibrancy.

We want to produce more entrepreneurs, technocrats and professionals with self-reliance and who do not depend assistance and goodwill from the government, are independent, stand on their own strengths. We are not a subsidy race but a people with pride and self-worth. We want to internationalise our abilities so we are not limited by reliance on privileges and quotas within our borders, but can flourish and succeed on the global stage.

This new narrative is not limited to the Malay economic agenda. A new, more progressive approach will also result in a new political orientation. The community's worries of late touches on the question of political power. There are those who opine that Malays will lose their political power due to the rise of non-bumiputeras as the deciding force in elections. Those who hold to such beliefs recommend that Malays unite to ensure that power remains in the hands of the bumiputeras.

I have no quarrel with a political unity of all Malays. In fact, Umno Youth once welcomed the *muzakarah* proposed between Umno and PAS. But I am also aware of the historical fact that Malays have hardly ever been united. In modern history, save for the opposition to the Malayan Union and the fight for Independence, the Malays are often divided especially by political beliefs and ideology.

This awareness is all the more relevant now that we see other parties, including PAS, respond cynically every time the suggestion of this unity is raised. In fact, even on the core issues of religion and race, PAS is willing to rebuff the hand we sincerely extend to them due to their preoccupation with power - to the point that the *haram* becomes *halal*, and what is bad becomes good.

Though this does not mean I reject the possibility of us reuniting, we must accept the reality that today the Malay vote is split. There is no Malay party - be it Umno or PAS - that can secure a hundred percent of Malay votes. In many areas, the Malay political split is such that 50 percent are on one side and 50 percent on the other.

This means that any side wanting to win, must win with the support of all Malaysians, regardless of race and religion. If we hope to rely on the Malay vote alone, we should be mindful that there are only 73 parliamentary seats with a dominant Malay majority of 70 percent and above. Such is the reality.

We must learn from the results of the last general elections where we almost relinquished power due to the loss of support from non-Malays. If we still subscribe to the illusion that we can win without their support, then 50 seats currently held by BN are in grave danger. If there is no concerted effort to practise an inclusive and moderate leadership, Umno's Malay leadership will disappear come the next election.

In the midst of us calling for Malays to be big-hearted and embrace the politics of moderation, the sensitivities of the bumiputeras must also be recognized and respected. The recent insult to Islam in a clip on YouTube is a case of how our patience and resolve are tested.

Article 153 of the Federal Constitution and the 30 percent equity target must be respected as the pillars and aspirations of bumiputeras, which neither threaten nor take from the rights and belongings of other races. If there are calls for the existence of vernacular schools be preserved, surely the bumiputera special position too should be protected and supported by all Malaysians.

What of the feelings of Malays who find it so difficult to gain employment in private companies because they cannot speak Mandarin, a criteria advertised as a requirement by so many companies?

Or look only at the 50 companies with the largest market capital in Bursa Malaysia; there is not one Malay CEO leading a non-bumiputera owned company of this group. Are we to

believe there is not a single Malay who qualifies on this front when there are many who succeed in managing internationally-renowned companies like Petronas and CIMB?

At the same time, we must also empathise with the feelings of the non-Malays - when they are referred to as *pendatang* or told to return to China or India; what of their feelings? This too is their country. This is their country of birth; in fact that of their parents and grandparents. What of the feelings of the poor non-Malay student denied government scholarship despite achieving outstanding results?

We often hear of grouses about how the government administration is dominated by Malays. Are we to believe that there are but a few non-Malays qualified to hold senior positions in the civil service?

When we fail to understand and appreciate the feelings of other races, the barriers that separate us become higher and thicker. Young Malaysians live within the confines of their own ethnic communities. The young Malay who attends religious school, a Middle Eastern university and watches Malay programmes on Astro Ria is alien to the young Chinese attending a vernacular school, a Taiwanese university and entertained by Wah Lai Toi. Each perpetuates mutual prejudices because of these barriers that exist.

Today, we are at a crossroads that will determine the future of our cause. This is the moment for us to stand united, based on a manhaj for our times and demonstrate our strength as Umno members who can look any challenge in the eye and brave all trials and tribulations.

I ask you now, are you ready to be with me to fulfil the trust we inherited for the sake of future generations? If you are ready, stand with me and we will prove in Galas, in Batu Sapi, in the upcoming elections that this generation of Umno Youth is resolute in mind and body, spirit and labour - we work hard, we strive, we give.

With all that we have, let history remember us as the bearers of our struggle's *maqasid*, who succeeded in radiating the torch and spirit of our cause for the sake of our common future. We will never retreat.

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