

**Ketuanan Melayu: A risky experiment**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**Disember 6, 2010**

I was born Malay and was hardly conscious of my race, either at school or at home. Race hardly cropped up in conversation except when we had form-filling to do - like applying for an identity card. Religion was something sacred and the only time we'd be aware of our racial and religious differences was deciding what to wear for a wedding or whose open house to visit, during the various festivities.

Thus, the recent clamour for "ketuanan Melayu" is destructive and damaging - not just for Malaysia but more so for the Malays, the very people that the "ketuanan Melayu" concept is supposed to protect. It is wrong because "ketuanan Melayu" is a dangerous experiment in social engineering.

Our neighbours were both Chinese and Indian. As children, we studied and played with each other, even hitched lifts to school when necessary, whilst the adults shared garden produce, swapped certain special dishes for the various 'open houses' and practiced their own version of 'neighbourhood watch'.

Today, the Wongs are living out their twilight years away from their children, who have now settled overseas. Their children were willing to pay for them to live in a gated community, but they refused. In gated communities, they said, people hardly know one another and lives are conducted behind high walls and electric fences. The Wongs are unwilling to trade their relative freedom for living in secure isolation.

Mrs Pillai is now a widow, living on her own. Both her son and daughter have emigrated and she is loathe to leave Malaysia. She tells me, her children saw no opportunities in Malaysia. Her daughter is particularly bitter at having to leave her mother and especially angry that she was denied a place at a local college, and denied help by a local political organisation who refused to recommend her for a study loan.

Several thousand non-Malays have left, but many Malays have also gone. Families are torn apart or wrecked by a false belief in so-called superiority. Our country has not benefited from the wasted talent.

Where's the sense of equality and justice?

When will Malays understand that the call for "ketuanan Melayu" creates antagonism at best, and violence at worst? There is open hatred toward non-Malays. The Malays have become arrogant; and non-Malays have been forced to be compliant. But for how long? Perhaps, it is the Malay who has more need of change. Where is their sense of equality and justice?

If "ketuanan Melayu" is supposed to benefit the Malays, why are the majority of Malays poor? If politicians had genuinely wanted to help Malays, the majority of Malays would now be wealthy, after 53 years of Umno rule. But this is not the case. The majority of Malays are poor.

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned that the Malays will "lose their power" if Pakatan Rakyat were to come to power. He labeled Pakatan leaders as a bunch of self-serving and racist politicians.

What "power" is he referring to? Is he referring to Umno's potential loss? Will the loss mean no more abuse of power and enrichment of family, friends and cronies? Is he lamenting the lack of control over the media, police, judiciary and the parliamentary rights and privileges committee? Did he also mean the inability to detain those who dare speak out against injustices?

Malay extremists claim that Pakatan's alternative call for "ketuanan rakyat" goes against the Malay rulers. However, no one objected when Mahathir clipped the wings of the royals.

NONEMahathir (left) and Najib Abdul Razak have sought to suggest that Umno/BN is a caring party, but despite 1Malaysia, Malaysians probably feel less united today.

Perhaps, the Malay extremist politicians promoting "ketuanan Melayu" can rightly be called "Children of Mahathir".

Why will the extremists not deal with the social ills that beset the Malay youth - drug abuse, abandoned babies, under-achievement, and Mat Rempit? They have been fed propaganda and expect instant rewards but soon become disillusioned. They then fall further into the trap that 'non-Malays are robbing them of their rights'. Is it any wonder they are bitter and have little aspiration?

The same group of extremists expects other faiths to respect Islam - but they fail to reciprocate this. It is alleged that in some mosques, the sermons preach unbridled hatred.

Many loopholes and obstacles

Last Saturday, a 14-year-old girl and a 23-year-old teacher were married at a mosque in Kuala Lumpur, after a religious syariah court approved the union. The teenager said, "It has been hard trying to juggle two rôles - as a student and a wife - but I am taking it in my stride."

Can no one else see that this is wrong? How does the state protect children from paedophilia? Has the child's health and maturity been considered? What about her mental and maternal health, when she undergoes repeated childbearing at a young age? What about her education?

Muslim men can remarry easily. So who will support her should her marriage fail? Or if her husband leaves her for a younger woman or fails to support her when he remarries? Our syariah law and welfare system has many loopholes and obstacles. Some women claim it works against them.

pkrcongress 281110 nurul izzah anwarLook at how Malay men perceive of their women. Despite equality in Islam, women are given short shrift. Nurul Izzah Anwar's (right) request for a debate with Ibrahim Ali was rejected. He called her 'small fry' and told her to contact the head of Wiranita, the Perkasa women's organisation, instead. This demeaning attitude towards women is replicated in many Malay households.

When will the champions of "ketuanan Melayu" talk about success, progress, innovation, creativity, harmony, sharing and excellence instead of alluding to the "only my rights matter" mentality?

We Malays must face up to our insecurities so we can live at peace with ourselves. The non-Malay is a convenient scapegoat for our failures. We need to admit we have problems and face up to them.

Our religious leaders must make a clear stand against polygamy, paedophilia, child-snatching and intolerance of other faiths. Our Malay leaders must learn to respect other non-Malay Malaysians and treat them as equals. Only then do we have the right to ask others to respect us. We must stop the hypocrisy and madness that is called “ketuanan Melayu”.

MARIAM MOKHTAR is a non-conformist traditionalist from Perak, a bucket chemist and an armchair eco-warrior. In 'real-speak', this translates into that she comes from Ipoh, values change but respects culture, is a petroleum chemist and also an environmental pollution-control scientist.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/150072>