

Key institutions used to control the opposition

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Comment: A primary principle of democratic government that can and should be imported into the Muslim Ummah is self-regulation by means of opposition dialogue and political parties.

Political opposition, accomplished through the right channel and by reasonable means, is NOT the same as "sedition", therefore blogs and other forms of detraction from majority party views may not be labelled as "seditious", as is the habit here in Malaysia.

"Sedition" is a weapons-based plan for the violent overthrow of the existing government, and this dictionary definition has been completely deformed in modern-day Malaysia.

Indeed, the infamous Internal Security Act (ISA) seems to rely on any meaning of "seditious" that the central government finds convenient for expressing its paranoia, whether or not it is reality-based.

Some might say that it more often not, although the absence of oppressive security around Malaysian hotels is some evidence of the effectiveness of Special Branch in keeping the bombers out of Malaysia.

Even so, your average public demonstration will not become violent unless it is deformed, when central government or police exert their typical "over-control".

Viewing some of these young citizenry being indiscriminately handcuffed and forced into police trucks recently has shown the tragic misapplication of government, and especially police force.

Business losses govt's fault

It is this tragic misapplication of police force that caused business losses during the recent anti-ISA demonstrations, and it is the government itself that should be held accountable for those losses, which never would have occurred had the demonstrations been allowed to proceed according to their entirely peaceable intentions.

Accordingly, the recent discussion at the Pakatan Rakyat-initiated "Parliamentary Roundtable on a New IGP for a safe Malaysia" seems quite relevant. Four resolutions were unanimously passed at that discussion.

Resolution One calls on the current Inspector General of Police, Tan Sri Musa Hassan, not to seek a further 2-year renewal of his tenure of service due to his failure in Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

In the past three years, this Inspector General of Police has failed to achieve all three core police functions -- to keep crime low, to eradicate corruption, and to protect human rights.

A truly civilized IGP will refuse to criminalise young citizens' participation in public political movements, with the full support of his Royal Authority.

Resolution Two calls for the appointment of an IGP who is capable of providing new police

leadership in rolling back the tide of crime which has risen so drastically in the last five years; to ensure a safer Malaysia for the general public, both within and without their homes; as well as to present a new image of democratic policing in Malaysia.

The rise of snatch thefts has risen to levels far beyond those of any other neighboring country, and is the shame of Malaysian law enforcement.

Resolution Three therefore calls on the Prime Minister to include in his KPI for crime prevention, not just the 20% reduction in street crime by 2010 (which is a good four years too late), but also reduction in ALL categories of crime as proposed by the Dzaidin Police Royal Commission in its report in May 2005.

Restoring public confidence

Resolution Four reaffirms the demands of the Malaysian public that the Prime Minister set up forthwith the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) as recommended by the Dzaidin Police Royal Commission, so that public confidence in the police force, so badly eroded since their disastrous handling of the Anwar Ibrahim matter, can be restored.

Surely, arrest and jail are horrendous penalties for the idealism of Malaysia's youth who are only trying to defend their convictions of how a democratic, fair, and just Islamic state should be governed.

Royal Police, as well as government servants and leaders, must understand and truly become "servants" of the people. They are not "little sultans" and should not be approached with bowed heads as if they were.

Malaysia can never be unified according to the "One Malaysia" campaign until criticism or even opposition to the majority government is treated with respect and dignity.

Royalty must truly STAY OUT of politics, and not interfere in ways that ipso facto change the alignment of freely elected political power. Such neutrality must also BE SEEN to extend to the Royal Malaysian Police.

This was the thrust of Tun Dr Mahathir's efforts during his administration and such regulation of royalty without fear or prejudice, and of courses without any overt disrespect to the Royalty themselves.

Perhaps Malaysia is fortunate to have retained their royalty, not like the Americans who made royal status completely against the law from the very beginning. Let us be careful, however, not to LOSE the royal prerogative.

The present Sultan of Yogyakarta delivered an inaugural address in 1988 in which he warned his people not to expect anything from him other than to symbolise and protect the rich heritage of Javanese culture.

The present Malay Royalty would be most wise to follow his example, by focusing exclusively on perpetuating the finest traditional values of Malay culture and protecting the special position of Islam in the Federal Constitution, and allowing the Malaysian political systems to evolve naturally, wherein the police are seen only to enforce laws formulated within parliament, without political favoritism towards the executive branch that clouds their reputation today. Insyah Allah.

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