

An open letter to Najib Abdul Razak
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Jeswan Kaur

Mr Prime Minister,

I am compelled to pen you a letter, feeling very distraught over the racial discord rearing its ugly head yet again.

The negative outbursts resulting from the High Court's approval for the Catholic weekly Herald to go ahead and use the word 'Allah' in its publication and the subsequent attacks on churches have made it very clear, that 1Malaysia is only and only political propaganda.

Your giving the go ahead for protests at mosques only added fuel to the fire, one that is sure to 'engulf' Malaysians across the board if not enough effort is put into extinguishing it.

You know very well that the unity in diversity Malaysians once enjoyed has been destroyed by the powers that be for their own gain.

God by any other name is God and the house of worship is simply that.

Is a Chinese denied entry into a kuil? If yes, then the annual show at Batu Caves in conjunction with the Thaipusam celebration is nothing but an exercise at making money, thanks to the devotees who offer prayers at a fee.

What about the Sikhs, whose holy scripture the Guru Granth Sahib Ji makes reference to 'Allah' and its derivatives Alah, Alhu, Allahu and Allahi some 46 times?

What does this tell you? Will the Sikh holy book be tampered with to erase all references made to Allah? Will the Sikhs be banned from reciting prayers from their holy book?

Mosque and blessed feeling for non-Muslim

If religion is so 'private', I wonder what will happen to that tourist with a tattoo of the word 'Allah' on her or his arm walking innocently along Petaling Street, Malaysia's very own Chinatown?

I was 22 when I started off as a journalist with an established newspaper company. Even then I had no hang ups over 'my religion and your religion'.

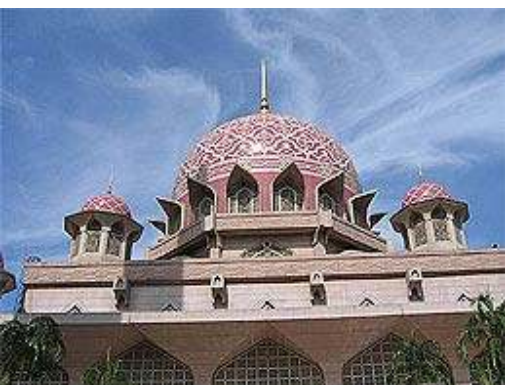
This explained why I asked my Muslim colleague if I could accompany her to the surau and wait while she did her solat. She was more than happy and said 'yes'.

As she fulfilled her religious obligations, I sat, feeling blessed at being in a house of worship.

It never crossed my mind that the surau was a place of worship exclusive to Muslims, until a senior reporter walked in and ordered me out, as she said the surau did not welcome a non-Muslim.

Along the way I had more Muslim friends, some who said it was a no-no for me to set foot inside a mosque or to hold the Quran.

But there was one Muslim whom I befriended who was only very helpful in helping me



understand more about Islam, including going through the Quran, understanding the Sunnah, Hadith and even experiencing the month long fasting during the Ramadan month.

Urgent need for comparative religion studies

As a reporter, I was assigned to cover assignments at mosques. It was never unnerving for me as it was for the Muslims who became restless noticing the presence of a non-Muslim at their place of worship.

I cannot understand why Muslims become so insecure at the sight of a non-Muslim inside their mosque. But they will only be too happy if the non-Muslim comes in with a purpose to convert.

Doesn't a non-Muslim have the right to set foot inside a masjid, since it is yet another house of worship, to seek God's blessings?

Maybe this is why many Malaysians especially are ignorant about religious practices in Malaysia because they are not given a chance to learn, with no conditions attached. Is comparative study not possible without converting?

We all know that Mecca is a city forbidden to the non-Muslims. But why? It is a place gifted with so much history and sadly the non-Muslims are only allowed to see the city through television and magazines.

A Muslim friend passed away a year ago and we, her non-Muslim friends, gathered at the mosque. We brought along selendang or scarfs to cover our heads, knowing well what was expected of us.

And we later marched to the Muslim burial ground after the Zohor prayers to bid our friend farewell. No hang-ups there.

Even shampoo and toothpaste not spared

I remember as a child listening my grandmother uttering the word 'Allah Taala' to the Muslim makciks in the kampung where we lived each time they talked about their respective health.

No one took umbrage then, so why today the unnecessary excitement over the court approval for a Catholic news bulletin to use the word 'Allah'?

Why does the government take offence and demonstrate absolute authority in displaying its dismay over this, to the point that your colleague Nazri Aziz went on to say that the judge had erred in allowing the word 'Allah' to be used? Is he saying that we no longer trust the judiciary?

Mr Prime Minister you definitely have lots to do, but your to-do list will be hogged by the utmost urgent need to address the issue of 1Malaysia, in the true sense of the word, where the Indians, Chinese and the Malays live as brethrens, with no hint of doubt or syak wasangka.

I believe advertisements showing toothpaste and shampoos exclusively for the Muslims have been doing a lot of damage. Is this a good example of 1Malaysia? Should the Indians

and the Chinese follow suit?

I do not understand how Malaysians of today are united in their diversity. A walk to the pasar malam scares me as I dread passing by the stall that sells beef, as there hangs the head of the cow that was slaughtered. Can the non-Muslims make noise about this? We do not because we 'understand'. But if pork meat was sold openly there would be chaos in the country.

Whither 'love thy neighbour' ?

Why? Just like we 'understand' when opulent mosques are built throughout the country.

But how would the Sikhs feel when Astro's Zee station abruptly ends the morning prayer telecast live from their holy shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, because of Astro's timing glitch.

This shows Astro's insincerity in making available such service to the Sikh community, not to mention complete disrespect for the prayers.

Also, why must the term 'babi' (pig) be used to hurl abuses at non-Muslims? Do the non-Muslims stoop as low as use the term 'lembu' to offend the Muslims?

Non-Muslims keep their pet dogs miles away from their Muslim friends who avoid 'man's best friend' like the plague.

Sad, truly that even animals are not spared by mankind, God's most challenging creation.

If we have stopped so low, then it is time the country's national anthem 'Negaraku' be relooked, for the rakyat no longer live bersatu dan maju (the people live united and progressive) nor does the rahmat bahagia, Tuhan kurniakan (God bestow His blessings and happiness on us) seems applicable anymore, keeping the racial tensions in mind.

I am sure God is thoroughly dismayed with his creation, for they have failed to grasp the true meaning of 'love thy neighbour' and are ever thirsty for each other's blood.

Attacking churches like that happened recently is a bleak demonstration of 1Malaysia.

When will the politicisation of religion stop?

How many more hearts will your administration break to protect the interests of the dominant race of this country?

Is worshipping the creator an exercise in politics?

Mr Prime Minister, where were you when a Muslim transsexual was accused of bringing shame to Malaysia?

For human rights sake, why did you not utter a word?

Is the issue of transsexualism a petty affair to you? What happened to your catch-phrase of 'rakyat didahulukan', etc?

Is Malaysia gearing towards a second black May 13? If the current events are to be looked at, then yes, the worry and fear are very real as we watch the nation emasculate gradually but surely.

But if we all come to our senses and realise the truth and beauty of 'love thy neighbour', all will be well, insyallah.

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