

An open-and-shut case
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During the Raya celebrations at his home in Pekan, the Prime Minister, Najib Abdul Razak, encouraged us to hold open houses and receive guests irrespective of race and religion to foster national unity based on '1Malaysia'. He said that an open house would be more meaningful if "we also open our hearts to our guests".

The PM should also include an open mind. A willingness to listen to other people's opinions should promote greater understanding and harmony.

If only Najib was aware of the level of intolerance some Malays have for non-Malays and non-Muslims. I don't expect him to know what happens at the ground level and I doubt if his advisers and close associates tell him the truth.

Fewer Malays visit non-Malay open houses for the various festivals. The issue is not just with food. Some object to visiting places where there is a shrine. A few refuse to eat off crockery and cutlery that has 'touched' pork. Others worry about the content of the soap with which to wash their hands. Many Malays are oblivious to how their non-Malay colleagues go out of their way to accommodate Malay sensitivities. Sometimes, even the best efforts are in vain.

When it comes to pot-luck or giving food as presents, non-Malays express frustration that their contributions are refused, even if the non-Malay took great pains to ensure the use of halal ingredients. Rejection of their unappreciated and wasted efforts, is hard to accept.

Official functions are also dominated by Malay intolerance. Recently, the Malay organisers of a parent-teacher association dinner at a school in Malacca arranged for a restaurant which had the 'Halal' accreditation, to cater the function. It would have been a halal Chinese dinner. Unfortunately, the arrangement was cancelled as a few of the Malay parents and teachers objected, because the restaurant owner and his staff were Chinese.

Earlier in the week, Najib told us to fight extremism. By his definition, I am probably an extremist. We can't deny that each one of us harbours some extremist or radical beliefs, even racist views. The difference is that we do not use these to subjugate others.

When Najib says that extremist groups or individuals reject the '1Malaysia' concept, he is wrong. Many of us embraced what he calls '1Malaysia', at school, home and work, long before this slogan was engineered. True Malaysians don't require a soundbite to live in a multicultural society.

I am appalled by the aggression of some Malays who show a shocking intolerance towards non-Malays and non-Muslims just so they can retain their 30% bumiputera quota, university admission quotas and other perceived 'special rights'. Some individuals have even accused the Chinese of being 'too greedy' and 'controlling the Malaysian economy'.

Increasing slurs go unchecked

The increasing racial slurs from the Malays go unchecked. It has little to do with maintaining racial interest but more to do with safeguarding personal interests.

Najib may defend his '1Malaysia' concept, claiming that it had not failed but was merely "work in progress". He said it needed the help of all segments of society before it could be realised.

Is he aware that in our schools, racial interaction is limited? Malay teachers actively discourage Malays from mixing with or even sharing their food with the 'kafirs' – the non-Malays. Parents are reluctant to report racist teachers because children will be victimised.

If '1Malaysia' exists, then why are West Malaysians subject to immigration controls in East Malaysia?

How can Najib excuse the terrible religious intolerance of the holier-than-thou Muslims who have no qualms about disrespecting people of other faiths? When they fall short of rational arguments, Malays tend to fall back on religion and then claim that they cannot compromise on their beliefs.

Thus, it is extremists like Ibrahim Ali (right) and Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who succeed in making Malays indolent and lose their competitive edge.

If '1Malaysia' is working; why has Najib failed to entice overseas Malaysians home? The non-Malays are worried about the future of their children. They lament the lack of equal educational opportunities. Overseas Malays resent the patronising extremists' tone. They prefer to be acknowledged for their hard work and not through being sycophants or because they are entitled to grab.

If the collective cabinet responsibility is to adopt Najib's '1Malaysia', then why are some members of his cabinet excluded? Why are the extremists, who force their feelings onto others, not silenced?

BN's policies have only stifled growth, stunted creativity and slowed productivity. Malays who are swayed by the voices of extremism do not attempt to make a better life for themselves or their kids. Why should they take personal responsibility when they can depend on the state?

Debilitating effect

It is like the RM15 million slush fund to help Muslim single mothers and divorced wives who fail to receive maintenance from their ex-husbands. It may help the women in the short term but its debilitating effect is to make the man irresponsible because he knows the state will pick up his responsibilities.

So why should right-minded Malaysians approve of a horde of people who contribute little to society yet believe it owes them a living? What kind of future does any child have whose parents believe that the world owes them a living, rather than working to earn a decent living?

Malays are entitled to substantial discounts for house purchases, university places, scholarships and public sector jobs. '1Malaysia' means nothing if privileges are reserved only for the Malays.

The system the extremists espouse isn't working. Why should good-for-nothing scroungers deserve anything which they did not work to achieve, never have to take responsibility for and don't have to live by the rules, the rest of us do?

Like many concerned Malaysians, I do not support a theory which compromises my values, integrity and conscience. Najib's message to the Malays should be to embrace change, and open their minds.

Furthermore, why should we refrain from sensitive issues? A reasonable and intelligent dialogue helps create a bedrock of trust and understanding. Bottling things up is dangerous. Forget about the open heart, it is our minds that should be opened.

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