

**Politics and fashion**  
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COMMENT Sometimes a politician's attire can bring out some special messages.

Last week, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak appeared in Baju Melayu for those few days at the Umno general assembly.

Sure enough Baju Melayu is a norm in any Umno assembly, given the fact that the party is one that champions the rights of the Malays. It would be unbecoming and suspicion-raising if a leader is clad not in Baju Melayu but Western suits or batik or something else.

According to a Malay friend of mine, Najib's Baju Melayu was of superior quality be it in its design, colour scheme or fabric quality.

As a result, it is impossible for anyone to see an Umno leader not clad in Baju Melayu during the general assembly, and it has been said that the traditional Baju stalls were the ones enjoying the best patronage outside PWTC.

Only the Malays are so insistent on their traditional costumes. In MCA's general assemblies, members come in white party uniforms, not *cheongsams*. Even the Communist Party of China which in recent years has tried very hard to revitalise nationalism, has seen its delegates putting on neatly pressed Western suits in its assemblies.

But it was all Baju Melayu in Umno's recent general assembly. Of course, this also shows the party's persistence in protruding the Malay ethnicity.

Najib's opening address was nevertheless more macroscopic by comparison, saying that there was indeed a need for the party to be more tolerant and sensitive about the rights of other ethnic groups in the country

But in the following two days, delegates started to sing laurels on their own achievements, falling short of the tolerance that the party president had touched on. While the overall tone was somewhat less aggressive than in past years, the entire assembly was still evolving around Malay ethnicity.

And that forced the president's concluding address to considerably shrink in its scope. He was seen answering to the calls of party members and reverting to the traditional mentality of the Malays.

When Najib reappeared at the PWTC after two days, he arrived in his capacity as the country's prime minister, selling his economic transformation programme.

This time, he came in suits, complete with his most favourite bright red necktie, and delivered his speech in English!

Najib's suits and necktie were of equally high quality; they looked utterly impressive when put on the tall and imposing stature of him. Najib's English, meanwhile, was also of commendable standards.

The content of his address was highly globalised as well as commercialised, hanging around business opportunities, developments, visions, competitiveness and all those globalised jargon.

His roadmap was an economic report par excellence, that kind of typical global business and economic development model that only world-class consultant behemoths in the likes of Boston Consulting Group or Mckinsey could come out with.

Sure enough the audience were all clad in suits. They were either well-heeled business magnates or high-calibre professionals.

None would come in Baju Melayu, or talk about ethnic issues in a vernacular language.

Baju Melayu or Western suits would depend very much on political needs. The choice of clothes that you put on or the words that should come out from the mouth would have to take cue from the occasional environment, failing to see which would only land you on complete embarrassment. - *mysinchew.com*

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