

Najib Should Heed His Own Call
MalaysianMirror.com
19 January 2012
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“Najib: Make voice of moderation louder” – this was Tuesday’s front-page headline of UMNO-owned New Straits Times reporting on the Prime Minister Najib Razak opening speech of the inaugural International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates.

Najib should heed his own call “to make voice of moderation louder” by declaring the transformation of the UMNO-owned Utusan Malaysia into the Voice of Reason and Moderation, ceasing henceforth to be the Voice of Enmity, Malice, Unreason and Extremism.

Utusan Malaysia had caused the degeneration of Najib’s 33 months as Prime Minister into the country’s most divisive, divided and polarized times both in racial and religious terms as compared to the first 33 months of the country’s first five Prime Ministers -Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Mahathir and Tun Abdullah.

If Najib is not prepared to make his “voice of moderation louder” and make a commitment to transform Utusan Malaysia, then Malaysians are entitled to ask what is the real purpose of the International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates which would have cost the government a fortune to host.

Najib would be guilty of not complying with his own prescription to the International Conference, i.e. that it is time for the masses to stand up and say to the extremists “with a single breath a firm and resounding no” - reducing the whole conference into an international joke and a farce!

There is another pressing test for Najib on whether the Prime Minister can claim the mantle of a “moderate” – whether he is prepared to renounce his past as an extremist and all vestiges of such extremism especially his extremist speech at the 2010 UMNO General Assembly, by retracting his “crushed bodies, lives lost” declaration (“walau berkecai tulang dan juga badan, walau bercerai jasad dari nyawa”) to defend UMNO from losing power in the next general elections.

If he is to qualify as a “Voice of Moderation”, Najib should categorically and unequivocally make an immediate and public commitment that he, UMNO and the Barisan Nasional will peacefully and with open heart accept the verdict of Malaysians in the 13th General Elections, including a change of government in Putrajaya with Anwar Ibrahim taking over as the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia!

If Najib is not prepared to make these two declarations, then his claims of “moderation” are completely suspect.

It is more than just coincidence that the International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates took place at the same time as the Suhakam public inquiry into the 709 Bersih 2.0 public gathering last year, with the Bersih 2.0 chair person Ambiga Sreenevasan making the very serious accusation against the Prime Minister of “endorsing” threats and criminal intimidation against her.

She recounted her “horrifying” experiences when her personal safety was “intimidated by state actors and non-state actors alike”, with Najib lending support to a silat group Pertubuhan Seni Silat Lincah Malaysia which had threatened to take on Bersih 2.0 if its rally was not called off.

Najib had labeled Ambiga as a “threat to Islam” and “enemy of the country”, while she was accused of being supportive of apostates, with calls to strip her of her citizenship and a campaign of demonization against Bersih by state-controlled media.

She said: “I believe all this was condoned by the government”.

Malay-rights group Perkasa had burned pictures of her and widely distributed leaflets stating 'Awas! Ambiga wanita Hindu yang berbahaya'.

Perkasa called her a traitor and made veiled threat when their chief Ibrahim Ali warned the Chinese against joining the rally, asking them to stay home and "stock up on food", in reference to the curfew declared during the 1969 racial riots.

The mainstream media blatantly accused Bersih 2.0 of being a front for Christian, Jewish and foreign groups.

Up to now, no action had been taken against these criminal intimidation against Ambiga and Bersih 2.0.

Is Najib prepared to publicly apologise to Ambiga and Bersih 2.0 for these extremist actions to demonstrate his seriousness in calling for moderates to unite against all forms of extremism whether in Malaysia or outside?

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