

Thugs Reign Supreme In “Moderate” Malaysia
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Prime minister Najib Abdul Razak’s message of moderation has not filtered through to the Malay extremists in Shah Alam. The ceramah organised by Hindraf and Anything But Umno (ABU), was disrupted by a gang of thugs who rode their motorbikes into the hall, threw leaflets and bottles around, and intimidated the crowd with rude words and gestures.

Is this the voice of moderation that Najib referred to in the International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates, attended by 1000 delegates in Kuala Lumpur last week?

Najib said, “The real divide is not between Muslims and non-Muslims, or between the developed and developing worlds. It is between moderates and extremists”.

And yet, in pockets of Malaysian society, the PM’s messages are ignored.

Why has no senior Umno/BN politician issued a statement condemning the thuggish Malay youths who disrupted the ceramah?

All that we read about is the wife of a senior politician denying she has been on another shopping spree in Australia. Or that various Cabinet members have enjoyed themselves in a multiracial open house for Chinese New Year.

Perhaps, the Umno/BN politicians couldn’t care less. Perhaps, they are too busy indulging themselves heralding in the Year of the Dragon.

Despite eyewitness accounts and a video recording on the violent tactics of the thugs and the fact that one young man was injured and had been rushed to hospital, the police dismissed suggestions of trouble at the ceramah.

Both the Selangor police chief Tun Hisan Tun Hamzah and Shah Alam district police chief Zahedi Ayob brushed off claims of injury and treated the matter without the gravity it deserves.

Is it any wonder that the rakyat has little faith in the police and by extension, in the government? The police cannot keep the peace and do not uphold the law.

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) has condemned the attack on the ABU/Hindraf ceramah and have demanded a timely investigation by the police.

The Bersih steering committee issued a statement to criticised the action of the youths who “rudely” stopped the ceramah in the Shah Alam City Council hall.

They said that this disturbance resembled another incident in 1996 when “dirty and violent” tactics had been used to disrupt the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor II (Apcet II) conference held at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

The committee said, “Such gangsterism must be stopped. It is the duty and responsibility of the police to protect citizens exercising their constitutional right to assemble and speak”.

If no one has watched the video of the ABU/Hindraf ceramah, the audience and participants were peaceful and had not antagonised anyone. The thugs came from nowhere, and made a ruckus with their shouts and by tooting their horns to disturb the peace.

Some were confrontational and waved rods and sticks besides shouting at the people in the ceramah.

Racial abuses were hurled at the participants, many of whom were Indians, calling them “keling” and taunting them with ‘you orang tak kenal hutang budi’ (you unappreciative lot).”

Another brute was heard threatening them with, “Berambus. Dah hidup senang dekat sini, nak banyak cakap. Aku bagi chance lagi. Kalau aku datang sekali lagi, mampus semua orang.” (“Get lost! Despite having a good life here, you complain too much. I’m giving you another chance. If I return, you will all die.”)

Some of the Malays who had come to attend the ceramah were seen leaving.

They must have been ashamed by the actions of their fellow Malays. Perhaps, they were scared of being victimised for being present at the meeting.

So much then, for Najib’s theory of moderation and his desire for Malaysia to have the “best democracy in the world”.

Najib must realise that extremist acts perpetuated by Malays in groups like Perkasa, or racially inflammatory articles in Utusan Malaysia, have never been censured, in the past. These people do not know the Rule of law because no one, not even the police have enforced the law properly without fear or favour. Is Najib afraid of these extremists?

The parallels to Zimbabwe are obvious. In the country which was once praised for being the “Bread basket of Africa”, thugs broke up peaceful gatherings and destroyed the little cohesion that was left. Before long, the level of violence had escalated with abductions and killings happening on a regular basis. The country is now destitute. Will Najib permit this to happen to Malaysia?

Malaysians are quick to praise people and idolise them. We praised Abdullah Badawi for being a reformer just because he said he would tackle corruption. Did that happen?

Najib gave us ‘1Malaysia’ and promised us a nation of moderates. But the extremists have blown-up that theory under his very nose. When will we ever learn that Umno/BN’s words don’t always translate into deeds?

But we have the power to change all this in GE-13.

If you are happy with thugs breaking up peaceful assemblies for no reason, or if you are unfazed by intimidation, then by all means maintain the status quo.

But if you had been in the crowd at the ABU/Hindraf gathering that night, or seen the look of fear etched in the faces of the audience and sensed the frustration of the organizers to retaliate, in case the thugs claim you started a racial war, then you should vote for change for the better in GE-13.

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