

Preach The Message Of Moderation To The Extremists
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The Prime Minister, Najib Razak preached the message of moderation to a Chap Goh Meh celebration at Fo Guang Shah Dong Zen temple in Jenjarom, Selangor on Monday night, invoking the Buddhist teaching of moderation.

Najib said: "Even though we may differ in terms of faith, moderation exists in almost all religions...Moderation points to an understanding of not practicing extreme, fanatical, militant or violent ideology among us."

He urged all Malaysians to support the concept of transformation and not to let the opportunity to pass to lift the nation to be a fully developed nation by 2020.

I commend Najib for spreading the message of moderation but he should realize that he was speaking to a converted crowd – as the audience in Jenjarom was imbued by the Buddhist teaching of "Middle Way" and/or the Confucianist doctrine of "zhong yong".

It does not escape notice that although the Prime Minister had been preaching the message of moderation at a few international forums, and hosted an International Conference on the Global Movement of Moderates only last month, extremism and intolerance have been rearing their ugly heads resulting in the worst racial and religious polarization in the country in the first three years of any Malaysian Prime Minister from Tunku Abdul Rahman to Tun Razak, Tun Hussein Onn, Tun Mahathir, Tun Abdullah and now to him.

Najib should continue to preach the message of moderation but it is important that he should not just spread the word to the converted like the Chap Goh Meh celebration at Jenjarom but must take the message to extremist groups and circles who need conversion to the message of moderation the most.

How can Najib expect the bona fides of his message of moderation, though repeated in international conferences or to selected audiences in the country, to be taken seriously if Utusan Malaysia, the official newspaper of his own political party, UMNO, is the daily personification of a shrill, irresponsible, extremist and intolerant Voice both on racial and religious grounds?

For the past three years, Utusan Malaysia had launched a relentless, seditious and incendiary campaign against the DAP, hurling lies and making the completely baseless and scurrilous allegations that DAP is anti-Malay, anti-Islam, anti-Malay Rulers, and even trying to establish a Christian Malaysia and appoint a Christian Prime Minister – without any effort by the Prime Minister to halt such "extremism".

In fact, there had been several occasions when Najib had been guilty of "extremist" outbursts himself since becoming Prime Minister in the last 34 months.

Najib must decide whether he wants to be an exemplar of moderation for all Malaysians, regardless of race, religion or political beliefs, or a Jekyll-and-Hyde who assumes the pose as a moderate to certain sections of the population while maintaining the posture of an extremist to others.

Let me put this question to Najib directly: when will he go into the den of the extremists to preach the message of moderation - especially Utusan Malaysia and UMNO Supreme Council?

Najib's Thaipusam message this year is to ask Malaysian Hindus to place their "nambikei (trust)" in him.

Or as he specifically said in his speech at the Thaipusam celebrations in Batu Cave yesterday: "You help me, and I can help you. Nambikei. You trust me and I trust you."

It is sad and an example of the serious straying from the path of "moderation" that a sacred religious festival in Malaysia should be reduced to such a blatant and unashamed politicking for votes for the forthcoming 13th general elections.

Najib's cynical "You help me, I help you" message has understandably evoked many adverse responses, including viz:

Firstly, "The Indian Malaysians have already given Umno-BN the trust for 50-plus years. What more do you want, PM Najib Razak?". (As voiced by reader to an online news portal).

Secondly, destroying Najib's claim that he is Prime Minister for all Malaysians, regardless of race, religion, region or socio-economic status, in keeping with his signature 1Malaysia policy. I regard Najib's signature policy of 1Malaysia as a policy of moderation. But does Najib still stand by this policy of moderation, when not only the Deputy Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin repudiated it by declaring from the very beginning that he was Malay first and Malaysian second, even the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Idris Jala who is responsible for expounding the 1Malaysia policy has dissociated himself from it last week, when he asked: "Why must I be Malaysian first and Malay second?"

The next stop for Najib to preach his message of moderation after Utusan Malaysia and UMNO Supreme Council is his Cabinet – and I await the day when every Cabinet Minister, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, can publicly declare that they are Malaysian first and their race, religion, region and socio-economic status second as advocated and propounded by the 1Malaysia Policy!

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