



## 61st UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# Amending Constitution will be ugly



AZMI ANSHAR

mishar@nst.com.my

FOR 500 years, the Malays have perceived themselves to be the most tolerant, the most accommodative and, dare it be stated, the most sangfroid tribe of peoples defined as a race by the Federal Constitution who embraced Islam as their transcendent way of life.

An understanding of the Malay anthropological timeline shows how Malays have exponentially expanded through colourMly mixed marriages that created what is now an intricate hybrid.

Unavailable and unthinkable in homogeneous Asian tribes, the Malay DNA is an eclectic collection of classes and ethnicities — blue bloods, aristocrats, commoners, migrants, Arab and Middle Eastern, Indian, Chinese, Javanese, Sumatran...a melange of peoples who ventured into ancient Malaya, instigating fame and fortune.

In 500 years of refinement, the Malays evolved stoically, unable to thwart the foreign invasions and long-term encampment and in centuries to come, obliged to sign a devil's covenant permitting British colonisation and rule that profoundly retooled the social fabric of the Malay nation.

The Malays may have had a small merchant class that emigrated to Europe and the Middle East but essentially, the jest stayed behind and remained insular, save for the pervasive and, arguably, liberating influences provoked by the migrating class that came by the shiploads in the centuries to come.

Despite massive cross-breeding and exposure to other cultures (British, Chinese and Indians to be more specific), that insularity—if it is



Sarakaw Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud greeting former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the assembly yesterday. On the right is Dr Mahathir's wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

to be characterised like that—is also the essence of the Malay mindset, with Islam as the overarching creed.

The Chinese, Indians and Arabs, with millenniums of civilisational expansion, trekking and global outreach, and establishment of foreign outposts, became entrepreneurially dominant as they relied on far-flung social intelligence, inner strength development and go-getting tendencies.

The Malays could only look on with envy and trepidation, helpless to compete or cope with the wealth of real experiences, acumen and know-how imported into their land and their consciousness.

The only philosophical essence left

to salvage is indigenous pride, constituted in the form of Malay nationalism that crept into conventional thinking, and, fast forward to the 20th century, transfigured that pride into the seminal battle cry "for religion, race and country".

The battle cry was soldered as a rallying point in the formation of Umno who, with the collaboration of their Chinese and Indian allies, engaged in a bloodless toe-to-toe confrontation with the British to win independence.

Fast forward again 53 years — post-Merdeka, post-May 13, post-New Economic Policy, post-Mahathir Mohamad's all-encompassing industrialisation and world beating ag-

gressiveness, the issue of Malay rule and indigeneity remains a generational cycle that intimately allude to that 500-year Malay epoch.

Alluding also to the fact Malays won't stomach any historical revisionism, Datuk Seri Najib Razak's mini-history tutorial, in the form of his policy speech, recounts the Malay sacrifice, generosity and compromise — sometimes by poetic lamentation, most times by earnest reminders — that value the strict adherence of past lessons and agreements.

Sure, a new political model, the one that Malays want to share with all fellow Malaysians, and the one that do not ignore present day realities, is

a proposition Najib harbours greatly for the future and also one that he implores Umno to accede.

But in rationalising the Malays' historical complexities, Najib drew an exacting line: you can invoke legitimate concerns over Malaysia's socio-economic policies (NEP, National Development Plan, National Economic Model) implemented in the spirit of the Federal Constitution but hands off Constitutional articles empowering Malay polity.

Historical agreements — Najib analogised them as binding corporate deals — won't permit these articles to be even served on the table for any kind of viewing with intent to transmogrify... period!