

Newspaper	THE STAR
Date	08 FEBRUARY 2017

# Let's stick to the chosen path

*The Star - 8/2/2017*

FEB 8 was the birthday of Malaysia's founding father, Tunku Abdul Rahman (*pic*). Sixty years ago, he was the young prince from the Kedah royal household under whose leadership Malaya was granted independence from the British.

A lawyer by profession, he understood the need to have a constitution under which the rights of the different races in Malaya would be protected and the monarchy preserved.

The renowned author Lewis Carroll who penned the classic novel *Alice in Wonderland* wrote: "If you do not know where you are going, then any path that you choose will get you there" (not make a difference).

As a newly-born nation, we had to be clear of our path to avoid being a failed state. This was more poignant given the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious populace that formed the fabric of the then Malaya.

Each group had its own interests and way of life that it wanted to protect, notwithstanding the diversity which abounded.

The late Tunku was clear on the path that our young nation should take and set in place the required infrastructure to ensure the continued growth and success of the country. A high degree of importance was placed in not only combating the Communist insurgency and improving economic wellbeing but, more importantly, on ensuring racial integration and religious harmony.

The path chosen was to be a united nation which would truly be a melting pot of the different cultures in the country. This was the cornerstone against which all economic and social programmes were to be referenced. Without racial harmony, there would be much discord and we would have lost our path and be meandering in the wilderness.

Of late, racial and religious tensions have been stoked to the detriment of the vision of the late Tunku who is remembered for his liberal and tolerant outlook.

It is in this context that the path we set for our nation becomes of extreme importance as



intolerance of religious and racial diversity is a sure-fire way of destroying what has been painfully built up over the years. Extremism only serves to sow seeds of mistrust and discord.

The recent action in Malacca not to allow religious extremists and controversial personalities to impart their skewed teachings is a step in the right direction, as allowing such activities is counterproductive to the aspirations and chosen path of moderation.

A recent dragon dance performance at a Chinese New Year function exposed the frailty

of our society as a truncated version circulated by irresponsible bloggers on social media cast aspersions on the level of respect shown to leaders. Racial undertones were played up. Have those who originated these posts taken leave of their senses?

This is not where we should be heading, where the actions of a few with self-centred ulterior motives tear away at our fabric of tolerance and amiability.

It is in this context that the messages posted by corporates to mark the different celebrations of the various ethnic and religious groups in the country have to be applauded.

The latest to join in the fray was the message posted by our national air carrier, Malaysia Airlines Bhd.

It had the young from different races speak impeccably in the various Chinese dialects to convey greetings. Full credit should go to the airline for focusing on this aspect to show how far we have come since independence. Language has always been the best communication tool as it embodies the feelings of the users.

This is the path that our founding father would have been proud of. Destructive agendas which are self-centred, harping on religion, politics and race, should be confined to the trash bins. Their perpetrators have no place in the path that we have chosen to be tolerant and appreciative of what the diverse groups bring to the betterment of our beloved nation.

Unity and racial harmony are key elements required to reach our destination. It is the pathway that we have to continuously strive to harmonise through positive thinking. We ignore this to our peril and it will contribute to our failure as a nation.

We are not like Alice in the novel who does not know her destination. Surely our founding fathers expect more of the country they helped to form so many years ago.

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