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GOOD GOVERNANCE

DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM AND POWER

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The prime minister's approach to governance and handling crises should be used as 'tools' by ministers and those in the civil service

SEVERAL speeches of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had already defined Malaysia Baru's approaches to domestic peace, progress and prosperity. They are also aimed at enhancing political stability, promoting religious harmony, redressing economic disparity and protecting national security.

The following approaches are adapted from the prime minister's speeches on Nov 29, Dec 3, Dec 8 and Dec 9, as reported in the *New Straits Times*, Bernama and other media. They are listed below on a thematic and verbatim basis, with very minor editing.

BUMIPUTERA POLICY: "Poor Bumiputeras must be given opportunities, so they can catch up with the other races. If we don't give them a little more opportunities than the other races, if we believe we must give everyone the same thing, and to give in to equality; then only those who are able to do so will succeed."

NATIONAL SECURITY: "The maintenance of national security, peace, harmony and stability is a shared responsibility. The government will ensure no one disrupts or makes a mockery of these core national values. The government will act according to the law to protect them."

DEMOCRACY: "Democracy has its limits. But everyone must understand and know, there will be repercussions for those who cross the line."

RULE OF LAW: "No one is above the law. The government upholds

the principle of the rule of law, and will act in accordance with the law."

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: "The government respects freedom of speech, but will not tolerate abusers who threaten public peace and order. Freedom of speech does not mean anyone can say things that provoke the sensitivities of others. The government will take action on those abusing this freedom."

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: "The government has pledged not to impose barriers on news reporting and communication. But this freedom must be used with full responsibility to avoid inter-racial breakups and disharmony."

FREEDOM OF ACTION: "Don't violate the law to fulfil selfish needs, cause anxiety among the people, and create chaos in the country. Avoid activities that could be the platform for instigation and sedition. The government will take firm action against anyone provoking or challenging the laws of the country."

The government had recently applied some of the above approaches to prevent the temple incident in Selangor from escalating into violence, like what happened in India 26 years ago. In 1992, "rightist Hindus' destruction of a large Muslim mosque in the Northern Indian town of Ayodhya was followed by widespread anti-Muslim riots across North India" (Johanna M. Lessinger [2003] in "Religious violence in India").

The recent use of the approaches is also very crucial because "problem of race relations is always a major challenge to nation-building process in a plural society" (Arjunan Narayanan & Kamarulnizam Abdullah [2012] in "Hubungan Kaum, Pembinaan Negara-Bangsa dan Keselamatan Nasional Malaysia").

However, Dr Mahathir's approaches to national security, from 1981-2003, were also guided by a philosophy on political stability and economic prosperity. It was because "political instability



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad speaking in Parliament (Nov 29) on the action taken by the government to keep the peace and maintain harmony among the races after the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple incident in Seafeld, Subang Jaya. FILE PIC

and economic backwardness threatened our national security" [Mahathir Mohamad, in Ruhanie Ahmad (2017), "Sekurisasi dan pengurusan keselamatan Malaysia era Mahathir 1981-2003"].

Hence here are Dr Mahathir's approaches to political stability, legitimacy and security; on equitable distribution of national wealth among races and between regions; as well as on discipline and abuse of power among PH members of administration and elected representatives, at the federal and state levels.

PRIMARY MISSION: "PH government will ensure Malaysia becomes more progressive. Hence the power bestowed on the government and the administration is to allow them to perform their duties, and not for self-benefit or interest."

ABUSE OF POWER: "If power is abused, the country will not progress. This will cause a moral decline in society. Therefore, be careful when using the power given to us. If we realise or feel unsure that the power may cause something not good to our country, do not exercise it. Instead, we discuss and get advice on how the power is to be exercised."

CORRUPTION: "PH won the GE14 because it fought corruption. Hence do not be involved in illegal activities like graft. If PH remains clean and doesn't get

greedy, it will continue to be in power and can win GE15."

NATIONAL WEALTH: "PH government wants all Malaysians to enjoy the country's wealth and independence. But if the gap between the rich and the poor is too far, it will raise feelings of envy and hate; or will create hostility between urban and rural areas, between the poor and the rich, even between one race and another.

Therefore, protect peace and harmony in Malaysia, to enable the country's wealth be distributed equally to reduce the gap between the urban and rural areas."

SECURITY MANAGEMENT: "When we have rioting and other issues, handle them wisely as a government that is concerned and with experience."

GOOD GOVERNANCE: "All the above can be achieved with good governance that is free from corruption and events intentionally made to stir chaos and racial animosity."

The above approaches are tools in state-making for use by PH members of the administration and policy-makers. Hence PH ministers and the civil service have to move on with vigour, fitness, discipline and wisdom.

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