

# The House belongs to all of us

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## If we let the impatient among us punch holes in its roof, it will come down on all of us.

THE Singapore sitcom *Under One Roof* (1995-2003) remains one of my favourite family-community television series.

It is about a Chinese family comprising a couple living with their three adult children, and how the five of them interact with each other as well as their neighbours, a Malay couple and two Indian siblings. They all treat each other as part of the larger “family” living in that block of flats.

The sitcom, to me, has many lessons of nation-building and I wish to highlight some here today to help this country’s newly formed unity government and also invite Malaysians to participate in the country’s future as members living under one roof, instead of becoming backseat drivers and disaster-mongers.

I feel that *Under One Roof* offers a very important lesson about spirituality. Spiritual growth is not just about rituals, prayers and pilgrimages; to me, the real and truer form of spirituality is the honest and generous attitude of learning from one another and depending on one another to build our own characters and to be part of something larger than ourselves.

The show usually begins with interactions between mini mart owner Teck and his homemaker wife, Dolly. Those of us who are married know that the key to a successful marriage is to “let go” and learn from one another and become new entities individually as well as a new “family-partner” entity.

**MOHD  
TAJUDDIN  
MOHD RASDI**



## Over the top

You can see that in the relationship Teck and Dolly have,

The three adult children’s lives are complicated by living under the same roof as their parents. Each of the five family members struggles to cope with all their differences, and this creates an opportunity for growth and for appreciating and accepting one another.

Then come my favourite Malay characters, a husband and wife who frequent Teck’s house for gossip, for help and for support and friendship. Oh, how I wish Malays in Malaysia are like that, but then I am 40 years out of date. The Malays I observe nowadays mostly do not visit any families who are not of their faith.

The final two regular characters on the show are two Indian siblings: the hard-working Daisy and her happy-go-lucky little brother Michael.

The drama and comedy, tears and laughter come about as all these characters interact with each other, nurturing friendships and helping each other to overcome the prob-

lems that arise as they live their lives.

Now we come to Malaysia.

The unity government, to me, is a God-given gift to this country. The Yang diPertuan Agong wisely managed the volatile situation following the 15th General Election and we narrowly avoided being led by a single-race-based political party that had no qualms playing the race and religion cards when campaigning.

So now the previously antagonistic parties of Pakatan Harapan, Barisan Nasional and GPS (Gabungan Parti Sarawak) find themselves having to work together, literally under one roof in our august House, the Dewan Rakyat.

It took a while for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to be appointed Prime Minister, and in turn, the new Prime Minister wisely took his time in deciding who to appoint to his Cabinet; he finally announced the names on Friday night after pushing back the time of the press conference twice.

Just like the characters of *Under One Roof*, each political party must help one another, learn from one another and nurture one another; they must be open to becoming new entities from the interaction of being in the same Cabinet and running the same country that all of them have sworn allegiance to.

Malaysia is not a company from which one executive officer can just up and leave. This is our country where we were born and very possibly where we will be buried.

There is nowhere else.

The Malays have a saying, “Jangan meludah ke langit”, or don’t spit into the sky, because your spit will only splatter onto your own face.

In a unity Cabinet, everyone must help each other to grow or *everyone* will sink together.

The Barisan ministers must learn to get closer to the people whose votes they lost while Pakatan’s must gain the confidence of the core Umno voters, the rural Malays.

GPS must learn that Sarawak cannot exist without the rest of the country and Peninsular politicians must learn that the federation cannot exist without Sarawak.

The idea that racial and religious issues only affect Peninsular Malaysia is a wrong notion as everything eventually crosses the South China Sea and will land in the Bornean states. And both Pakatan and Barisan must also learn to appreciate the people of Sabah and Sarawak as their own brethren citizens, living under one roof.

Finally, I have a bone to pick with civil society groups that think they know better how to run the country.

Their loud backseat driving shows an atrocious lack of faith that could sink the unity government – along with all of us.

I view the actions of these groups, and those of some retired politicians who keep second guessing the PM and undermining a fragile partnership, as social and spiritual treason.

There are so many complaints! About Cabinet members facing court

proceedings, about young Cabinet members with no experience, about the Cabinet having only one Indian member, and so on and so forth.

If we undo the King’s tireless work to stabilise the political situation in the country, then we will deserve a government that will use our money and do anything to acquire the necessary numbers to get into power – and in the process wound democracy in Malaysia, perhaps fatally.

Again, please, jangan meludah ke langit. If there are grievances raise questions by all means, but do it without resorting to accusations, and without an air of false authority or selfish morality. We are all living under one roof. If we punch a hole in it, the whole roof will come crumbling down on all of us.

Just as the political parties must learn to become new entities so must we, the people, learn to be patient, to give them space to reform, rethink and reconfigure their perspectives on this country we all live in. Let us drown out the sound of arrogant backseat drivers and nay sayers of doom.

Let us sail together through the uncharted waters of this new type of government – and may we eventually dock close to the promised land.

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