

Moderation needs stronger promotion and better practice

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IT IS highly commendable that Malaysia, under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's leadership has been promoting the wise philosophy of moderation.

The International Conference of the Moderates in Kuala Lumpur on Jan 19 was impressive as the beginning of a long universal campaign to spread the philosophy of moderation. This is essential to fight the growing extremist ideologies and practices that we see not only abroad but even at home.

The conference was a success with 50 speakers and 350 delegates from 70 countries.

While they welcomed the prime minister's initiative to hold this significant conference, they also rightly raised some serious concerns on the viability and prospects of this proposed Global Movement of Moderates.

However it is important to establish at the outset that moderation should not only be aimed at combating extremism and terrorism in the field of religious understanding and accommodation/tolerance. To be pertinent the moderation movement has to fight extremism that is practised across the board, in the social, economic, ethnic, and cultural fields as well.

Malaysia can make major contributions, to enhance policies and practices of moderation in all these spheres of human endeavour, only if we can show that we practise what we preach.

Yes, Malaysians have much to be proud about our record of relative moderation. However we must recognise that we have a lot more to do and to achieve, if our call for moderation is to be credible and taken seriously.

Hence, to be realistic and relevant, we have to do more to put our house in better order. Our policies and practices need to be reviewed, revised and even transformed at a faster pace.

Thus the serious problems of polarisation have to be addressed much more strenuously. For instance national unity has been eroded by some narrow sectarian policies and practices that cause much dissension. Religious and racial harmony can also be considerably improved, if the constitutional provisions are implemented with more fairness and moderation.

Thus the first step is for government to come down hard on extremist pronouncements and actions. Politicians who make seditious remarks should be pulled up and charged for causing public discord, and not be allowed to get away with their extreme views.

All government policies and the implementation programmes must be scrutinised for elements of extremist practices that violate the spirit of the constitution.

All Malaysians must feel that they are treated equally on the basis of their basic needs and their human rights, rather than mainly racial and religious considerations.

Anyone, especially political leaders, found guilty of promoting and practising extremist conduct has to be pulled up and made accountable.

This is particularly pertinent in our unique multiracial, multi-religious and multicultural society.

All this is essential to ensure that we receive more support and less criticism, both internally as well as externally, for this laudable initiative to promote moderation, to counter all kinds of extremism and especially terrorism worldwide.

Unless we can show the world that we mean what we say, it may be difficult for Malaysia, despite the best intentions of our prime minister and the government, to continue to lead the Global Movement of Moderates.

All peace loving, progressive and true Malaysians will give their full support to this philosophy of moderation, given its faithful implementation.

Ramon Navaratnam
Chairman
Asli Centre of Public Policy Studies

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