

**Let's rekindle Onn Ja'afar's values**  
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**By Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein**

LAST Sunday, Jan 19, marked the 58th anniversary of the passing of my grandfather, and also Umno's founder – Allahyarham Onn Ja'afar (pic). If you follow and read my social media postings, I wrote a short piece on him on my Facebook.

The traction received was overwhelming and undeniable. That's why today I'd like to share a little more about his values, and take the opportunity to comment further on Barisan Nasional's victory in Kimanis as well as some views about the nation.

Barisan's recent victory in the Kimanis by-election means a lot to me personally as it brings with it a set of values which I have held consistently since before. Not only because it is the fifth consecutive by-election win after Cameron Highlands, Semenyih, Rantau and Tanjung Piai – but mainly because throughout the campaign, I personally felt the strong and undeniable sense of unity amongst Barisan's machinery.

Campaigning from polling district to polling district, village to village, house to house – I saw with my own eyes how dedicated our multi-racial machinery campaigned for Datuk Mohamad Alamin's victory. They included not only party members, but also supporters who were Malay-Muslims working hand-in-hand with the Chinese, Indians and Sabah bumiputra.

This reminds me of Onn Ja'afar's vision. When he once proposed that Umno's membership be open to all races in 1951, it was met with strong opposition. After nearly seven decades, who would've thought his own grandson would bear

witness to his dream and struggle to see all races united become a reality through Barisan.

Just to share a little story: while campaigning in Kimanis with Johor Umno state liaison chief Datuk Hasni Mohammad, Datuk Seri Mohd Sharkar Shamsudin and other party comrades at Batu Enam, we visited Mrs Agnes Anggim's house.

At the front of the house was a "Merry Christmas" sign. Naturally, Sharkar then wished her son who greeted us downstairs a "Merry Christmas", to which he replied that he was a Muslim but his parents are Christian. It was so heartwarming to see these differences did not prevent them from living under the same roof.

Rather, they respected each other's religion and beliefs without prejudice.

Truly, this is what Malaysia represents – a spirit of togetherness and unity that Onn Ja'afar envisioned for the nation. As his grandson, this is what gives me the strength to carry on, this gives me hope – to continue doing my utmost to continue the legacy he left behind. This is even more important today, as the nation continues to be engulfed in an atmosphere of pessimism.

One can easily be consumed by this endless cycle of negativity. Just in the first three weeks of 2020, countless rhetorical and racial statements have been made, actions further exacerbated by politicians on both sides which contribute to worry and fatigue in the people. This must end.

In Kimanis for example, those desperate to win resorted to slander to bring down their opponent. This includes putting up provocative billboards blaming Barisan for practising racial and religious politics, pointing the finger at us as the ones who implemented Pas Sementara Sabah (PSS), damaging and tearing down our flags and posters. These immature acts are not what the people want to see.

The voters wanted to know what has been planned to develop Sabah, how they will advocate welfare through empowering the youths, how will their safety and security be safeguarded, and other initiatives to ensure their needs will be prioritised. Unfortunately, it was the Opposition Barisan that championed the people cause.

And that's just in Kimanis. In Johor, the birthplace of Umno, political polemic was also not exempted. In Sembrong, a billboard wishing my constituents a Happy New Year was taken down forcefully. Instead of focusing on the people, the Johor state government had been distracted with changing their exco line-ups and even changed their Mentri Besar. If my grandfather Onn Ja'afar who was also a mentri besar of Johor once is still alive, I believe he would be saddened by the state of affairs and unrest in Johor led by Pakatan today.

Don't get me wrong, I'm writing this piece not to just attack Pakatan. But I am speaking on behalf of the people who would like to see a positive change in their lives.

At the multiple by-election campaigns, I've met countless individuals and had heart-to-heart conversations with them, and the message was clear – they are disappointed with Pakatan's performance.

So, my message to Pakatan is simple – as long you are still in power, please be a government that cares. Enough of rhetoric, enough of slander and serve the people. You were voted in with the people's vote, do not betray their trust. There is much you can do to improve the livelihoods of all Malaysians, by focusing on economic policies that directly provide benefits to those who need it the most.

If we just look at the past year or so, there have not been many policy decisions that have directly benefited the people. Instead, we've seen only multiple U-turns, such as the promise to abolish tolls gradually; and a sign that the economy is flailing, evident by low dividends for ASB account holders and worse yet, our

Armed Forces has faced its lowest LTAT (Armed Forces Fund Board) dividend in history.

Looking back, Onn Ja'afar spent his entire life fighting for the welfare of the people – that was his main agenda. In the mid-1950s, he established the Rural & Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) which has now grown into Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara). His aim was to rebuild the rural society, specifically the Malay bumiputra, as well as improving the community's economy.

He fought hard to ensure the rural community received the best education possible to secure a better future for themselves. This is what Pakatan Harapan should be focusing on instead of playing the blame game.

However, to my family in Barisan, we must never assume Pakatan's weakness as our advantage. Always remember that our victories should not be a reason for us to be boastful and arrogant. Instead, we must be consistent in rectifying our weaknesses and strengthening unity in our party. We must fulfil the needs of our constituents in our parliamentary and state seats.

We must instead build on our collective strength to guarantee that Barisan will once again win back the trust of all Malaysians and be the people's hope to govern the nation.

Let's strive to emulate the values that Onn Ja'afar fought and struggled dearly for. Let us be united and share the same determination he had. We can do so much more to ensure to a brighter future for our nation, for Malaysia belongs to us all, and it will be our children and grandchildren that will inherit this land. We must defend her together.

Remember, #MalaysiaDeservesBetter.

Last but not least, let us say a prayer for the late Onn Ja'afar and may Allah SWT have mercy on his soul and grant him the highest status in Jannah.

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