

Patriotism in malaysia essay



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The compulsory national service training ‘ programme is intended to foster the spirit of patriotism, encourage racial integration, and develop “ positive and noble traits” among the younger generation’ (Malaysiakini 13/6/2003). The targeted group is our youth of about 18 years. The object of this programme was expressed by Defence Minister Najib Tun Razak, who chairs the special cabinet committee. The programme will focus on basic military training, patriotic training and personal development including community service. ‘ (Malaysiakini 17/6/2003) In the military, one is trained to follow orders of superiors without question. Would this be one of the characteristics graduates of this training would be instilled with?

Hopefully not, because for a person to be a patriot, he must be a person concerned with the well being of the nation and this means that he must be a person who will be brave enough to stand up to criticize bad leaders, bad policies, bad laws, corrupt practices, lack of transparency in the leadership and/or the government of the day, injustices around him, abuses of powers and everything that is not good for Malaysia and Malaysians as a whole. He must be a participative citizen of Malaysia, and not a by-stander silenced by fear and/or other self-interest.

A patriot must be a person who will also get involved in the day-to-day politics of the nation, at every level; this would mean he will not only support good candidates for leadership, but will also offer himself as a candidate. There was, at one time, many Malaysians who were like ‘ Hang Tuah’, a person with total and blind loyalty to the rulers of the day, irrespective of whether justice or injustice was done or ordered to be done – but today we find that more and more Malaysians are becoming like ‘ Hang Jebats’, a

person who would voice out and protest injustices done even by the rulers of the day.

Hang Jebat protested against the injustice done to Hang Tuah, unlike the blind unquestioning loyalty of Hang Tuah (although I may not agree with the form he employed). Many Malaysians, especially the youth of Malaysia, who were once all-believing of what their leaders said and of all that they read in the media are today in 2003, more critical and questioning.

This questioning in the minds of Malaysians has today gone beyond private chit-chats in coffee shops in low voices to actual expressing of their opinions, views and questions freely. This questioning of the leadership and their actions, is not just at the level of the ‘ wakil rakyat’ but is happening at all levels of society where election of leaders is still allowed, and is beginning to result in the rejection of bad leaders and the raising of new and hopefully better leaders.

This, I believe, is good for the nation and country as a whole. This active participation of the patriotic citizen must be encouraged and supported. The government should have faith in its citizens and should do away with the present appointment of town councillors, members of Jawatankuasa Kerja Kampung (JKKK), Jawatankuasa Kerja Taman (JKKT) and such bodies, and give back the power of choice of leaders to the citizens of Malaysia.

It is a misconception that Malaysians are not patriotic and need special compulsory ‘ patriotic training’ to develop patriotism. Patriots shackled and prevented from the expression of their patriotism by a controlled media, the inadequacies of means of free expression, and lack of avenues of

participation in nation building would and have inadvertently suppressed this sense of patriotism.

For example, the increase in the amount of the deposit for persons interested in running for elections as wakil rakyat and state assembly men is definitely not in the best interest of the nation for it would only serve to prevent good people who are not financially well off from offering themselves as peoples' representatives. It is many a time not only the rich that make the best leaders, and I believe that the creation of greater obstacles to a person who is offering himself or herself as a leader of the nation and the Malaysian people cannot be for the good of the nation.

Suppression of patriots kills patriotism. The announcement by the Minister of the 'removal of the controversial clause in the National Service Bill which makes it an offence to incite others from not participating in the programme was retracted due to complaints from the public' (Malaysiakini 25/6/2003) must be applauded as a success for the cause for freedom of expression and as an example of a good leadership trait, ie of a leader that listens to voices of the Malaysian people.

In tabling the Bill, the Minister was reported to have said that it is the responsibility of the people to ensure that multiracial Malaysia continues to be stable and strong to achieve development in view of various new attacks such as globalisation and liberalisation. Therefore, we cannot let the polarisation and alienated relation among races to continue. (Malaysiakini 25/6/2003). The national service training council is to have persons

representing the major races. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation.

In Peninsular Malaysia, as an example, the major ethnic group cannot simply be said to be Malays, Chinese and Indians. Take Indians for example: they are in reality comprised of many ethnic groups like the Tamils, Telugus, Gujeratis, Punjabis, Malayalees and Goanese. Then there are also the Sri Lankan Tamils (Ceylonese) and the Sinhala communities. Similarly with the Chinese and the other races in Malaysia. Within each of these ethnic groups, there are also people of different faiths like Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, Bahai and others.

In fact, many Malaysians by reason of inter-marriages, some going back many generations, can now no longer be simply identified with any particular ethnic group. There has been integration but alas till this date, many of us still prefer (or are forced to) to identify ourselves by our ethnicity and not as Malaysians. To develop the patriotic Malaysian irrespective of ethnicity, religion and/or cultural difference is our hope and aspiration, but so long as race and religious-based political parties exist both in government and in the opposition, it becomes a difficult task.

As long as there is an insistence on Malaysians to identify their 'bangsa'(race) in official forms, we have a difficult task in developing the patriotic, resilient and united Malaysian equipped and ready for the ' various new attacks such as globalisation and liberalisation', and other challenges facing our nation. Compulsory national service itself will not work without a change in our political party identities.

There has to be serious evaluation within the various political parties in Malaysia to review their present objectives and causes with the realisation that race-based and religious-based struggles and causes must give way if we truly want to develop a patriotic, resilient and united Malaysian nation, prepared to meet the new challenges and threats of this era which will face our nation. <http://www.malaysianbar.org.my> Powered by Joomla!

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The very fact that the now proposed national service training council is to have persons representing the major races itself goes against the very object of this national service program. The training council should be comprised of the best and most qualified persons, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliations, gender, whether they are in government or not, etc. A compulsory national service for Malaysian youth only, I believe, is insufficient to achieve the object of developing the patriotic Malaysian. There has to be a total review of many aspects of Malaysia.

For one, our education system that still primarily uses a banking methodology, which is hard on critical and differing opinions and views, and which seems to be geared primarily to generate good obedient workers for our various economic sectors needs to be reviewed. An education system that develops a thinking, expressive, critical and holistic Malaysian is needed. Similarly, there must be a review and repeal of all legislation that curtails and/or which instils the fear to dissent, if we truly want to develop stronger, united and patriotic Malaysians who will be ready to face the challenges and threats of tomorrow.

Like the withdrawal of the offensive clause, the government of the day and all leaders at all levels must encourage Malaysians to voice out their views, opinions and suggestions, and the leaders must listen to their people and respond accordingly. That will definitely better achieve what this national service program seeks to achieve rather than the compulsory program itself. Encouraging participation of the Malaysian people, will develop a more patriotic Malaysian people concerned with the betterment and the strengthening of the nation.

The silence, the ‘tidak apa’ attitude, the ‘lepak’ culture, the indifferent behaviour of many Malaysians today can be linked to the fact of curtailed freedom, the inadequacies of avenues of expressions, the general feeling that leaders do not listen to the people after getting elected. As such, I am of the opinion that the Bill should be made accessible to the members of the public, and the Minister and Parliament should allow for more views before passing of this Act, if that is what the Malaysian public really wants.

The Minister, when he removed that controversial clause, demonstrated that our present leaders do sometimes listen to the views of the Malaysian public, but alas, that alone is not sufficient, for if we really desire ‘to foster the spirit of patriotism, encourage racial integration, and develop “positive and noble traits” among the younger generation’ and all Malaysians, we must ensure that multi-racial Malaysia continues to be stable and strong to achieve development in view of various new attacks such as globalisation and liberalisation.

Lastly, I must say that I believe that patriotism, racial integration, and ‘ noble and positive traits’ cannot be developed by force, threats and compulsion. Hence, the very existence of all kinds of offences and penalties within the Bill itself must be reviewed. Remove the shackles that curtail freedom of expression and participation, increase accountability and transparency in government, and then we may no more need the compulsory national service program to achieve the objects of this program.