



THE nation called 'Malaysia' became a reality on 16th September, 1963 but for 46 years its birth was celebrated on 31st August, a date memorable to the Peninsula but without any meaning whatsoever for Sabah and Sarawak.

How did that happen?

I was in Form 4 in 1963 and not at all politically conscious. What I understood at that time about the steps leading to the formation of Malaysia came not from reading the newspaper (my favourite page was the comics) but from listening to adult conversations - Brunei first planning to come in but then opting out, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak willing to go the distance, Cobbold Commission, referendum etc.

From all the talk around me, I learnt that the Tunku was pursuing and pushing for all brokering to be settled, so that this 'new' nation Malaysia could be born on 31st August too.

But it was not to be. Disagreements brought delays and the Tunku's dream was fulfilled only 16 days later.

Much as I dearly love the Tunku and always will, I question why no recognition was given to 16th

September during his tenure.

Only this year, 47 years later, are we collectively as a nation giving that date its due prominence in history.

Looking back, in a sense Malaysia never had a chance to live and take its baby steps. There was no 1st Anniversary, no 2nd, no 3rd

But anniversaries are just a once-a-year thing. Worse than the date distortion is Malaysia's being robbed of her destiny as a nation embracing a diversity of people and cultures.

We could have been a showcase to the world of what decency and love are about. But we are not.

You see, love means relationship and being decent means being fair. That would have meant reaching out across the seas to our brothers and sisters in Sabah and Sarawak in true friendship, giving without expecting returns, defending their rights and homeland because it is the right thing to do, especially for family.

But we did not.

We never took the trouble to reach out and touch the hearts of Sabah and Sarawak. We treated

them merely as curious touristy places and never felt their heartbeat, never knew their disappointments, never recognised the betrayal they suffered, never heeded the lonely cries for help.

Any wonder then that our country has a fragmented soul? Any wonder then that we have never truly been one in heart and spirit?

And we stayed so blinded, so wrapped up in our own needs and wants that we never knew the concept 'Malaysia' had taken on a distorted form and that agreements had not been honoured.

We stayed that way until now – 47 years on.

Here we are, finally realising the horror contained in those years, outraged at the plunder and for the first time determined to make amends.

Sabah and Sarawak, much as the mainstream media may lie to you, we the ordinary rakyat here in the Peninsula are not celebrating Hari Malaysia in the sense of accomplishment and achievement. There is nothing to shout about. And much to be ashamed of.

What we will be doing on the night of 15th September and on 16th September is confirm once again the greed and corruption of leaders from here and the complicity of the leaders over there that led to the plunder of wealth both where you are and here, the deprivation of your rights and ours, and the untold suffering everywhere.

You have been duped and so have we.

These will be days of sobriety and for the voice of justice. These will be days when we see the betrayal in all its ugliness and acknowledge that a colonial master emerged in our midst who is of us and far, far worse than the British who left.

These must be days for reflection and repentance for we too, all of us over here and all of you where you are, have been guilty of letting this happen - by our very silence, because of our fear.

The important question is: Is all lost?

No.

Why not?

Because, for the first time, we have decided collectively to recognize nationhood on its true date of birth.

And because we have begun the steps to live the truth, the lie and all it stands for will be displaced and so too all men whose tongues are forked.

There is an ongoing cleansing of this nation that the government is too blind to recognise. Its misdeeds of the past, so long hidden, are being uncovered time and again against its will.

For me, justice will prevail because the misdeeds could still be hidden but they aren't any longer.

There is a passing of the old and we need to leave the past behind to move ahead.

But how?

We, the rakyat, must learn to trust one another again and to reach out and help.

Not easy when so many hurts abound? Yes, but the choice is ours to take the risk.

It makes us vulnerable.

Yes, but someone once said that if you want something you have never had before, you must do something you have never done before.

We over here want the best for you.

So on behalf of the thousands over here, I ask for your forgiveness.

I ask that you forgive us our negligence of you, our never really embracing you as family, our keeping quiet as political leaders violated your trust and robbed you of your inheritance, your rights and your riches.

On behalf of the Peninsula, I ask for forgiveness and hope you will forgive because that very act of forgiveness on your part will give you peace and set you free to live again in the fullness for which you came into being.

So let the healing begin.

Much love,

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