

**SPEECH – YB DATO' SERI HISHAMUDDIN TUN HUSSEIN**

**SEMINAR PEMBANGUNAN INSAN 2009**

**ANJURAN KELAB UMNO MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA**

**“RACIAL INTEGRATION AND ITS CHALLENGES”**

**MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY, 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2009**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH.

Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers especially Kelab UMNO Melbourne for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to meet all of you here today.

Secondly, as much as I am honored to address you today, personally I am here to listen, as such I intend to keep my speech short giving us more time to dialogue.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

We are gathered here today at a point in time when the only constant that is clear and definite: - whether political, cultural social; economic, race or religion is: - CHANGE!

**How** change is affecting the way we view Justice, Democracy and Human Rights!  
**How** we view justice, dignity and peace, has changed! **And how** these changes are shaping the global landscape of the future! A future in which you as citizens and the future leaders of Malaysia and the world will have to navigate, if you are to survive intact; able and to stand tall amongst the other nations of the world.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

**Indeed: Today we stand at a turning point in our history.**

Knowledge information and news (truth, half truths, and outright lies) digitized, networked, automated, persuasive and instantaneous have become a very important component shaping our political, economic, cultural, values, virtues and identities.

Economically and politically; we now operate in a globalized environment in which local and international events are inevitably linked in complex and unpredictable ways:-

- i) The global economic meltdowns and financial crisis.
- ii) Climate change and its impact on prices of food and related global food shortages.
- iii) The widespread devastation caused by HIV AIDS and more recently H1N1.
- iv) The growing global divide on religious racial and cultural issues giving credence to the self fulfilling prophecy of an inevitable clash of civilization. Two bombs explodes in Marriot and Ritz Charlton in Jakarta, Muslims across the globe are painted with the same brush and colour of violence, terror and death.
- v) The changing geopolitical and socio global landscape where the world population is getting younger; where this younger population is coming of age and at a time when the ICT revolution has resulted in the flow of information across border without any sense of responsibility and accountability.

Politically at the National level, we are faced with a situation that was unthinkable a mere 2 years ago:

- BN lost its 2/3 majority in Parliament;
- Five states fall to the hands of the opposition;
- We have had to probably face more by-elections in the last 17 months than we have had in the last 17 years;
- Street demonstrations have become more prevalent.
- > Public has become more cynical,
- > Criticisms and continue to demonize the very pillars and institutions of nation building:-
- The Monarchy

- The Judicial System
- The Police
- Parliament, Senate and State Assemblies
- Cabinet-Civil service and state governments.

**In short**, local and the international; domestic and the foreign: - from gigantic transnational capital flows and human migration, to a new global and national political debate, to suicide bombings:-

We suddenly find ourselves caught up in a reality to an extent that we have not begun to really appreciate.

### **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

So if you ask me how now? What are we to do? My simple answer would be 'No Worries!' It will be difficult; it will be hard. Managing change has always been difficult but not something that we as a nation have not faced or gone through before.

- Merdeka
- May 13<sup>th</sup> 1969
- Darurat -communist
- Konfrontasi -Indonesia
- Economic crisis; From Asian dragons and tigers to economic basket cases in the 90's.

Infact it is an exciting time we live in. Before us is a healthy and more vibrant landscape, a white canvas to be painted the way we want our country to be. Business cannot be as usual. We would have to make fresh, credible, bold but at the same time doable, and often difficult policy decisions. But if we get it right then we would probably be ensuring the stability, security, unity and harmony of future generations for at least another 50 years.

## **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

Which now brings me neatly to our topic today:-

### **“RACIAL INTEGRATION AND ITS CHALLENGES”**

A topic at the heart of all Malaysians and one that is very close to me personally being the grandson of Dato’ Onn who wanted to open UMNO to all races and as the son of Tun Hussein “Bapa Perpaduan”. In this respect I continue to dream for a more united Malaysia and I continue to hold on to that dream.

Unfortunately with what I have said earlier as a backdrop, I must admit integration is becoming much more difficult and full of challenges for example, even education and schools (the place in which Malaysians place their hopes for a brighter future for their children) can easily become the place in which we can be most emotional. It can very easily become ‘contested territory’. On the issue of language; between multilingualism and mother tongue, the preservation of indigenous and ethnic languages; and the position of Bahasa Malaysia could easily turn ugly for the whole world to see. The decision to teach Science and Mathematic in English can easily raise heated cultural and ethnic linguistic defence. Communal conflicts and tension are re-expressed in arguments about our school, our curriculum and our teachers.

Hence my reply to the topic given to me to-day is simply this, that,

**“Malaysia’s greatest challenge at independence, our diversity, 53 years later is still our greatest challenge”**

## **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

**WE** have still not come to appreciate the value of our national cultural diversity as strength. **WE** have still not begun to think of our multiracialism beyond just a compromise. **WE** have yet to see it as an exciting invitation to work together and to create a unique society together as we still see it merely as a contract to live and let live. **WE** continue to be defensive of our diversity and continue to only see potential sensitivities and pit falls. **WE** are not proud of it, nor do we teach our children to see the opportunity in it, to benefit from it, make capital out of it, and leverage it.

Today 53 years on; at a turning point in our history, faced with many new challenges, we have to decide how to move forward. This is where the leadership of Dato' Seri Najib as our new Prime Minister is so important. I submit "Satu Malaysia; rakyat didahulukan, prestasi diutamakan"; at this point in time is critical. We cannot work in the old environment with old mindsets. The concept of One Malaysia pillared on 3 main thrust of **comprehensive acceptance** as opposed to more tolerance, **nationhood** as opposed to many different pockets of nations within a nation and, **social justice for all** irrespective of colour; religion and background based on a strong sense of justice and fairness, must not fail. The government needs to and will walk the talk. 'One Malaysia; people first, performance now' must be translated into something the public sees and more importantly feel.

When Dato' Seri Najib took office he was conscious to the fact that this government could no longer work in the old environment with the old mindsets. That the government had to focus on what the Malaysian public cared the most and as Prime Minister he had to keep his government focused on these priorities. He had to immediately make fresh and credible but often difficult policy decision. His government has to be seen to be fair to all; one that needed to walk the talk – able to make bold but at the same time doable decision. Otherwise 3 years down the road the vision will remain only a concept and we face the electorate then at our peril.

## **LADIES AND GETLEMEN:-**

Our PM did not waste anytime. In his maiden speech on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April he announced the release of 13 ISA detainees, lifted the ban on opposition papers and announced the review of the ISA. He then announced the liberalization of 27 sub sectors in services sector followed by the Financial Services sector, 2 stimulus packages amounting to RM67 billion together with a website to track their implementation. 13 more ISA detainees (including HINDRAF leaders) were released; KPI's were set for ministers. Scope of PEMUDAH in this civil service to assist in the public delivery system was expanded to include matters of housing, crime and public transport. FIC guidelines were then liberalized.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> July, only 3 months since his maiden speech, on his 100<sup>th</sup> days speech he made 11 announcements ranging from toll rates, public housing, licenses for hawkers and petty traders, taxi permits, roads water and electricity in Sabah and Sarawak, to increase the allocation for TEKUN to the amount of RM150 million, RM15 million specifically for entrepreneurs from the Indian community, reduction of fees for motorcycles below 250cc to a new Amanah Saham 1Malaysia worth 10 billion units.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July he announced details of the six key result areas ranging from reducing crime, combating corruption, widening access to affordable and quality education, raising living standards of the poor, improving infrastructure in rural areas and finally improving public transportation. All of which he personally will take charge to ensure that it is delivered to the public across agencies across department and divisions and even across ministries. Reducing crime falls directly under my portfolio.

## **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:-**

It is therefore very clear that this government means business. We have listened we have put the public first we have prioritized and we will perform. Given a chance we are beginning to think of our multiracialism beyond mere tolerance beyond just a compromise between race and religion. After all the search for an accommodation between many races, many cultures and many religions is now the world's problem. It turns out that unity prosperity and openness, new dimensions for exchange, collaboration, mutual learning and mutual investments – are not only harmonious but are mutually necessary goals. If we do it right, this maybe the way globalization becomes, within national and regional boundaries – a force we can harness for cohesion rather than for alienation.

Racial Integration – Though the odds are against us, though it may still be a dream that has yet to materialize – we must continue to hold on to that dream; work hard at it with sincerity; honesty and integrity – Terus berdiri berfikir dan bertindak sebagai satu bangsa, Satu Malaysia.