

THOUGHTS**'Malaysia Prihatin': Sustainability of Unity Through the Cultivation of Knowledge, Moral, and Social Activism**

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Opinions on topical issues from thought leaders, columnists and editors.

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The Malaysia Day 2021 celebration, themed 'Malaysia Prihatin,' is the primary ambition and commitment to maintaining the country's unity and the spirit of patriotism. According to Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the word 'prihatin' means caring for and paying attention to something, having a common emotion, and striving to accomplish something.

On 16 September, we shall commemorate Malaysia Day despite the fact that our nation is afflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This should not, however, prevent us as a Malaysian society from nurturing and sharing our affection for our beloved nation. Moreover, we must play our part in appreciating the history of the establishment of the Malaysian Federation, as well as cherishing the contributions of the previous leaders and heroes who had sacrificed to set our country free from British colonial rule. As Malaysian citizens, we should keep the spirit of unity and togetherness, so that it continuously follows the spirit of Malaysia's Independence Day.

We need to offer a thorough reflection that 'Malaysia Prihatin' is not just merely a yearly national theme, as it comprises the country's vision and desire to develop Malaysian citizens who are equipped with unique personal and national identity. This includes patriotism, empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, and responsibility, all of which demonstrate the values and criteria of human capital development. In this context, human capital is defined as the intellectual resource found in every human being. It shows that an individual is an important resource who can use his or her knowledge and skills to contribute to society and the country at large.

Human capital development is extremely important that it is also mentioned in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021–2025), with a focus on strengthening human skills and community participation, as well as an emphasis on improving the quality of the community, social cohesion, and the application of knowledge, culture, and morale.

Moreover, the actions and values of togetherness, concern for others, and earnestness, are all universal values emphasised by every religion. The Islamic perspective highlights that the act of caring and the effort to unite Malaysian society for the betterment of the ummah is pivotal. Nonetheless, the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, as well as Islamic laws, must become the foundation.

We also need to reflect on when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) migrated from Mecca to Medina. Among the first things he did was to unite the Muslim community, especially among the Muhajirin and Ansar, and he worked on an agreement with the Jewish community and other races through the Medina Charter.

It is a demand to live in unity, to care for each other, and to show an effort to avoid divisions in society regardless of religion, race, or skin colour, under the auspices of Islam. The lesson from the event of the signing of the Medina Charter is for us to emulate in maintaining the harmony of life in Malaysian society. The words of Allah in the Qur'an state:

"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may [get to] know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware" (Al-Hujurat: 13).

Cultivation of Knowledge

To achieve 'Malaysia Prihatin', awareness and knowledge are essential. It means that the process of treasuring the history of our country and the effort to perceive our lives, the environment, and current affairs are crucial. For example, in the context of 'Malaysia Prihatin', we need to reflect on the meaning of 'prihatin' and how 'prihatin' can be demonstrated. All these require knowledge, skills, and/or experience to better understand and implement the said subject matter. In fact, education and knowledge gained from authentic sources can guide us to decide the best method for harnessing the value of empathy and how it can be implemented for ourselves, our family, and our society.

Islam highlights the importance of knowledge in human life. In the Quran, the terminology 'knowledge' and other relevant words that depict knowledge are mentioned 105 times. Even the first revelation revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad also influences the importance of knowledge.

According to al-Ghazali, knowledge is closely related to the formation of one's soul and inner spirituality. In this context, it raises questions, such as how can a person carry out the aspiration of 'Malaysia Prihatin' if he or she does not know the relevant history related to Malaysia Day? What is the best way to exercise empathy as a Malaysian citizen, and why is it important? Therefore, knowledge must be the basis that allows an individual to evaluate and understand a subject matter to some degree.

Morality and Spirituality

The value of empathy shown among the community shows that there is a formation of morality (akhlak) and spirituality (ruh). Morality does not only refer to one's character, behaviour, and habits, but also encompasses an individual's relationship with one's creator, as well as with other beings. To achieve the aspiration of 'Malaysia Prihatin,' as well as a responsible and united society, requires discipline and constant commitment. In fact, according to al-Ghazali, the formation of good morality is shaped by a good soul and spirit.

Rasulullah (pbuh) said in a Hadith: "Know that in a body there is a lump of flesh; if it is good, then the whole body is good; if it is bad, then the whole body is bad; know that it is the heart (qalb)" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). The heart (qalb), which is meant in the hadith, is related to one's soul. If one's soul is internally good, then the morals formed outside one's body are necessarily good, and vice versa.

In the context of living in a society, Islam strongly recommends a life that can be lived together by practising good morals, which shows that it rejects an isolated lifestyle. Islam also points out the importance of balancing life in this world and the hereafter. As mentioned in the Quran:

"Rather, seek the 'reward' of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has granted you, without forgetting your share of this world. And be good 'to others' as Allah has been good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah certainly does not like the corruptors" (Al-Qasas: 77).

Therefore, the goal of achieving 'Malaysia Prihatin' is also a demand that is celebrated by Islam. In this context, the concept of empathy also shows the effort to collectively develop the morals of society and as a vehicle to produce a society with good character and personality.

Social Activism

Community participation and involvement in realising the country's mission to develop a society equipped with the value of empathy can be considered as a social activity that requires the spirit of togetherness and cooperation from all walks of life. Islam sees social activism as a method for collectively improving the good quality of life (hayat tho'yibah) and strengthening the role of the individual in society as caliphs. The concept of caliph refers to human beings created by Allah, which He has perfected with intellect, as the best of His creations. This concept allows humans to organise, prosper, and sustain the earth as a conducive habitat.

The formation of Malaysian society that upholds the vision of 'Malaysia Prihatin' is seen through the lens of Islam as a call for dakwah, and activities that are highly demanded by the religion. Among the examples of noble social activism is when a person shares knowledge on how to become a caring person with a group of people in the community and invites others to do so; this demonstrates empathy so that others can also share their feelings. This is particularly because the formation of 'Malaysia Prihatin' certainly requires a continuous effort.

The implementation of social activism can also shape togetherness and foster unity through 'wasilah,' or a relationship built between communities so that an activity can be mobilised effectively within the larger community. Therefore, social activities such as mobilising people through education and awareness to build 'Malaysia Prihatin' can also be regarded as a joint effort in which different sections of society work together to improve existing weaknesses and build the character of successful human beings. As mentioned in the Qur'an, stating that:

"Let there be a group among you who call 'others' to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil – it is they who will be successful" (Ali-Imran: 104).

Therefore, achieving the aspiration of ‘Malaysia Prihatin’ requires continuous efforts from all ranks of Malaysian society to assist in fostering, strengthening, and preserving unity among Malaysians. The human capital that integrates the cultivation of knowledge, the formation of morals (akhlak), the strengthening of spirituality (ruh), and the implementation of social involvement guided by dakwah and shariah Islamiyah should be the fundamental foundation for the country to attain ‘Malaysia Prihatin’.

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