

# ISLAMIC FOUNDATION OF MALAY - MUSLIM CULTURE OF TOLERANCE

Speech presented by M Kamal Hassan, IIUM at the  
Effective Capacity Building for Senior Officials from OIC  
Countries, organized by Universiti Malaya

12<sup>th</sup> November 2013



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- **ISLAMIC MODERATION OF  
THE MALAY SOCIETY AND ITS  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE  
AND STABILITY OF THE NATION**



1. Tolerance as part of Malay culture. The maritime nature of Malay states and being on the major sea trade route between West and East : long exposure to foreign presence and inter-mingling. Malacca as an example.

- 2. Malay leaders in the 50's and their political compromises through *PERIKATAN* to accommodate non-Muslim demands and needs until the present through *BARISAN NASIONAL*. Examples set by Tengku Abdul Rahman and *PERIKATAN* leaders in the post-Independence period. Independence achieved through negotiation not revolution as in Indonesia.

• The position of Islam as the religion of the State in the Constitution with safeguards for others. Two legal systems. The democratic system made it possible for the political aspirations and values and laws of Islam to be fulfilled through the ballot box. No justification for violence. Democratic system leaves out the need for extremist and violent demands.

- 4. GOVERNMENT POLICIES, WHILE RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO GIVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE MALAYS AND BUMIPUTRAS, HAVE BEEN ACCOMMODATIVE OF NON-MALAY NEEDS AND DEMANDS; EDUCATION, CULTURE, BUSINESS, POLITICS.

- 5. ISLAM OF **AHL SUNNAH WA AL-JAMA'AH** AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EMPHASISING GOOD **AKHLAQ**, WITHOUT VIOLENCE, FANATICISM, EXTREMISM.
- THE IMPACT OF **WASATIYYAH** VALUES IN ISLAMIC CULTURE, EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

# DIGNITY OF THE SONS OF ADAM

Q. 17: 70

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ  
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.

# Knowing One Another

- "O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you" (Q. *al-Hujuraat* 49:13).

# No Compulsion in Religion

- “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing” (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2:256)

## Free to Believe or Not to Believe

- “And say, ‘The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve...’  
“(Q. *al-Kahf* 18: 29)

# Respect Religious Differences

- “And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah , lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do.”

(Q. *Aal-‘Imraan* 6: 108)

# Acceptance of Religious Diversity

- “For you is your religion,  
and for me is my religion.”  
(Q. *al-Kaafiruun* 109:6)

## MORAL EXCELLENCE IN ENJOYING THE RIGHT AND PROHIBITING THE WRONG

Q. 3: 110

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ  
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ  
لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ  
الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

You are the best community brought fourth [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah . If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.

## UPHOLD JUSTICE EVEN IF IT IS AGAINST SELF-INTEREST

Q. 4: 135

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ  
عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَن تَعْدِلُوا وَإِن تَلَوُّهُ أَوْ  
تَعْرِضُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا﴾

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah , even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted

## JUSTICE AND BENEFICENCE AS DIVINE COMMANDMENTS

Q. 16: 90

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ  
وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.

## MODERATION IN PERSONAL CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR

Q. 31: 18 وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾

And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful

Q. 31: 19 وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَأَغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾

And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys."

# PEACEFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS IS THE NORM

Q. 60: 8

لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

# Inter-religious Cooperation

- “And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.”

(Q. *al-Maa'idah* 5: 2)

# Justice Above Self-Interest

- “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah , witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.”  
(Q. *al-Maa'idah* 5: 8)

## THE RIGHT WAY OF PROPAGATION

Q. 16: 125

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَدِّ لَهُم  
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ  
أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided.

# EXTREMISM IN RELIGION PROHIBITED BY THE PROPHET (S.A.W.)

Sahih al-Bukhari: Volume 1, Book 2, Number 38:

عن أبي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال إن الدين يسر ولن يشاد الدين أحد إلا غلبه فسددوا وقاربوا وأبشروا واستعينوا بالغدوة والروحة وشيء من الدلجة

Narrated Abu Hurairah:

The Prophet said, "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the nights." (See *Fath al-Bari*, p.102, Vol. 1).

## GENTLENESS AND KINDNESS IN THE SUNNAH (1)

فحين اشتدت أم المؤمنين عائشة رضي الله عنها على اليهود الذين دخلوا على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم سابين له بصيغة التسليم فقالوا: السام عليك بدل السلام عليك، قال لها وهو فطن لما قالوه: يا عائشة إن الله رفيق يحب الرفق ويعطي على الرفق ما لا يعطي على العنف وما لا يعطي على ما سواه.

'A'isha, the wife of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him), reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'A'isha, verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness and confers upon kindness which he does not confer upon severity and does not confer upon anything else besides it (kindness).

Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Number 6273:

## GENTLENESS AND KINDNESS IN THE SUNNAH (2)

ومتمثلا أيضا قول النبي صلى اللهم عليه وسلم: (إن الرفق لا يكون في شيء إلا زانه ولا يترع من شيء إلا شاناه).

'A'isha, the wife of Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him), reported Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) as saying: Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective.

# EXTREMISM IN RELIGION PROHIBITED BY THE PROPHET (S.A.W.)

The Prophet (S.A.W) did not prohibit the good things (*al-tayyibat*) in this world for human consumption and physical wellbeing, but those good things were never a part of his primary concern as he preferred to live a life of simplicity, frugality, humility and moral restraint. In one of his famous supplications, the Prophet (S.A.W) showed his holistic and comprehensive vision of life, and proper attitude towards his religion (*al-din*), the world (*al-dunya*), the Hereafter (*al-akhirah*), life (*al-hayah*) and death (*al-mawt*):

*O Allah, improve for me my religion which safeguards all my affairs; and improve for me my worldly existence for in it is my livelihood; and improve for me my Hereafter for to it is my return; and make this life an increase for me in all that is good; and make death as a relief for me from all that is bad.*



# PART TWO

# BEING GOOD & COMPASSIONATE TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS IS A RELIGIOUS DUTY OF THE BELIEVERS

- *Narrated Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As: Mujahid said that Abdullah ibn Amr slaughtered a sheep and said: Have you presented a gift from it to my neighbour, the Jew, for I heard the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) say: Gabriel kept on commending the neighbour to me so that I thought he would make an heir? - Sunan Abu Dawood, 2446*

- *Narrated Abdullah ibn Umar: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The best friend in the sight of Allah is he who is the well-wisher of his companions, and the best neighbour is one who behaves best towards his neighbours. Transmitted by Tirmidhi. - Al-Tirmidhi, Number 120*

- *Narrated Abdur Rahman ibn Abu Qurad: The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed ablution one day and his companion began to wipe themselves with the water he had used. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked them what induced them to do that, and when they replied that it was love for Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) he said, "If anyone is pleased to love Allah and His Messenger, (peace be upon him) or rather to have Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) love him, he should speak the truth when he tells anything, fulfill his trust when he is put in a position of trust, and be a good neighbour." Bayhaqi transmitted it in Shu'ab al-Iman. - Al-Tirmidhi, Number 1289*

- *Narrated Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "Allah Most High has allotted you your characters just as He has allotted you your provisions. Allah Most High gives worldly things to those whom He loves and those whom He does not love, but He gives religion only to those whom He loves, so he who is given religion by Allah has been loved by Him. By Him in Whose hand my soul is, a man is not a Muslim till his heart and tongue are submissive, and he is not a believer till his neighbour is safe from injurious behaviour on his part." Ahmad and Bayhaqi, in Shu'ab al-Iman transmitted it. - Al-Tirmidhi, Number 1292*

- *Narrated AbuHurayrah: The Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings be upon him) observed: He will not enter Paradise whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct. - Sahih Muslim, 15*
- *Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "O Muslim women! None of you should look down upon the gift sent by her she-neighbor even if it were the trotters of the sheep (fleshless part of legs)." - Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Number 740*

- *Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbor and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet." - Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Number 158*

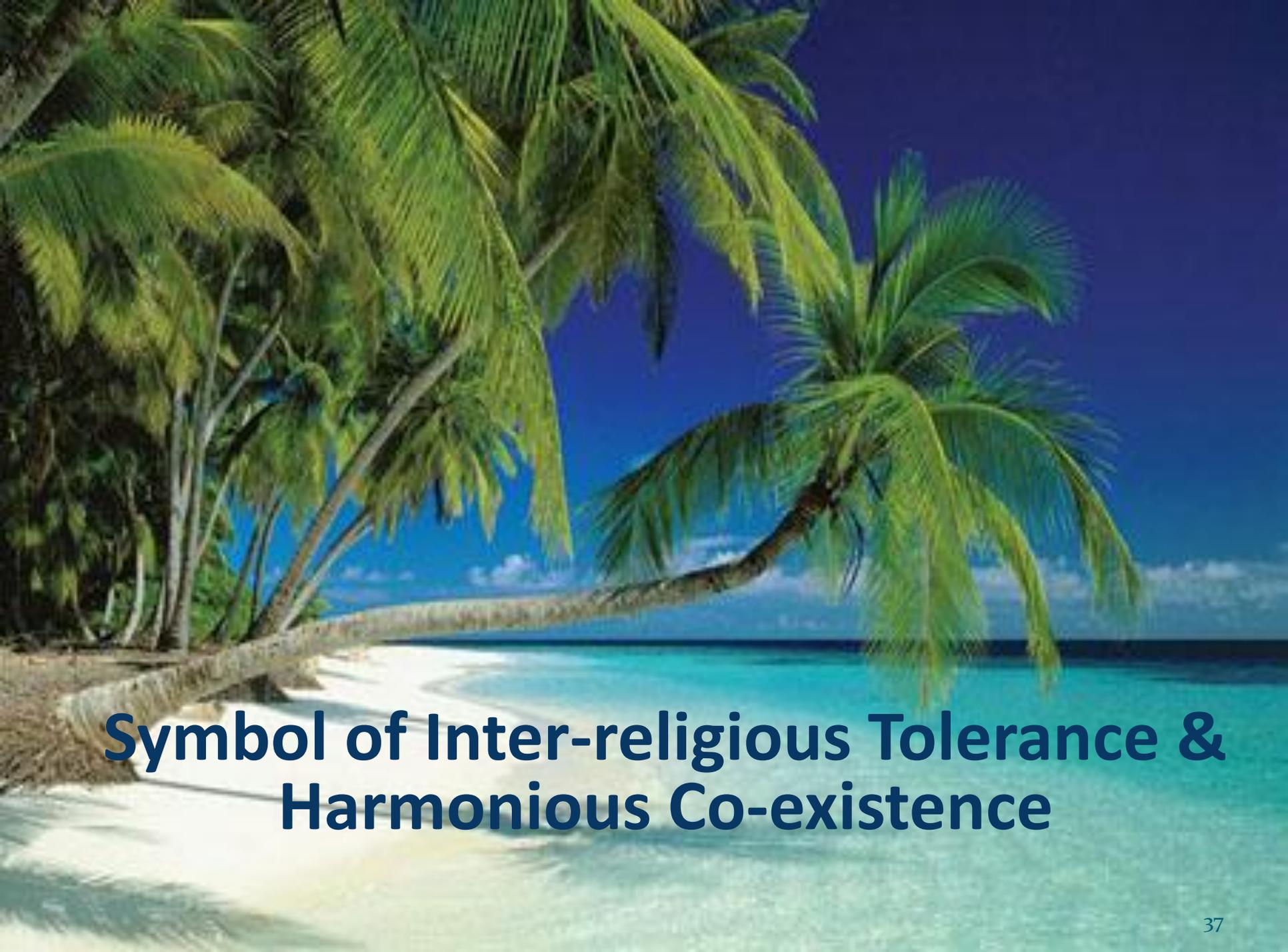
- *Narrated Abu Shuraih: The Prophet said, "By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!" It was said, "Who is that, O Allah's Apostle?" He said, "That person whose neighbor does not feel safe from his evil." - Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 8, Number 45*



# PART THREE



**Religious Tolerance of the  
Malay People Needs to  
be Studied & Highlighted  
by Western Scholars**

A vibrant tropical beach scene featuring several palm trees with lush green fronds leaning over a white sandy shore. The turquoise water of the ocean meets the beach, and a clear blue sky is visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and idyllic.

**Symbol of Inter-religious Tolerance &  
Harmonious Co-existence**

## Respect

Muslims around the world say that the one thing the West can do to improve relations with their societies is to moderate their views toward Muslims and respect Islam.



([www.gallup.com/press/104209/Who-Speaks-Islam-What-Billion-Muslims-Really-Think](http://www.gallup.com/press/104209/Who-Speaks-Islam-What-Billion-Muslims-Really-Think))  
-accessed 26 April 2011-

## **CONT...**

What the survey does not reveal, however, is that the Muslim communities in Southeast Asia or in the Malay-Indonesian world are, relatively speaking, among the most tolerant and accommodative Muslim communities in the world, despite the Western media's tendency to sensationalise or exaggerate news about the incidents of Muslim violence or militant attacks. This is the view of several Western scholars and social scientists who have studied the peoples and cultures of this part of the world.

## **CONT...**

If there are exceptions, as in the case of the Moros in Mindanao, in southern Phillipines, the Patani Malays of southern Thailand, or the Acehnese Indonesians in Indonesia, these are due to the long bitter history of injustice or oppression by the central government, or aggressive Christian evangelisation in Muslim dominant areas, or the infiltration by external militant elements who do not represent the wishes and aspirations of the masses or the elites.

## **CONT...**

In the Malay-Indonesian world, the Muslims have for a very long time been living together with non-Muslim minorities of various ethnic groups. They have learned to coexist harmoniously with the “others”. They have also accepted the democratic political system adapted to local conditions, in which Islam is allowed – as in the case of Malaysia and, to a certain extent, in Indonesia – to play an important cultural and political role within the framework of the national constitution and national ideologies.

## **CONT...**

It should be pointed out that the idea and practice of sharing political power between Muslims and non-Muslims is the hallmark of the Muslim community of Malaysia and Indonesia, while this would be seen as a novelty or an impossibility in several Middle Eastern countries. In the case of the secular republic of Singapore, the minority Muslim community has also learned to adjust to the secularising policies of the state, and while the religious leaders do not agree with some of the perceptions and prescriptions of the government from time to time, they have always lived and will continue to live in peace with their non-Muslim fellow citizens.

# STATUE OF LORD MURUGA at Batu Caves





# Statue of Kwan Yin in Penang



# Reclining Buddha in Kelantan



# Open House Tradition



# Major Religious Festivals are National Holidays in Malaysia



# Muslim Religious Leader with Non Muslim Leaders



# Religious and Ethnic Public Holidays in Malaysia

- Hari Raya Puasa, Eid al-Fitr, Ramadan, Hari Raya Haji, Eid ul-Adha, (Islamic New Year) and Maulidur Rasul (Birthday of the Prophet).
- Chinese New Year
- Hindus in Malaysia celebrate Diwali/Deepavali, the festival of light, while Thaipusam is a celebration in which pilgrims from all over the country meet at the Batu Caves. The most important Sikh festival is the Sikh new year or Vaisakhi festival.
- Wesak (Malay for Vesak), the Buddhist festival commemorating Buddha's birth, is a public holiday. Malaysia's Christian community observes most of the holidays observed by Christians elsewhere, most notably Christmas and Easter. Good Friday, however, is only a public holiday in the two Bornean states. The harvest festivals of Gawai in Sarawak and Kaamatan in Sabah are also important for East Malaysians.
- New Year's Day, Chinese New Year, and the start of the Islamic calendar are all public holidays.

# *Chinese Style Minarets in Malacca*



# *Unique Chinese Mosque in Kelantan*



# Gate to the Chinese Mosque *in the* *“Verenda of Mecca”*



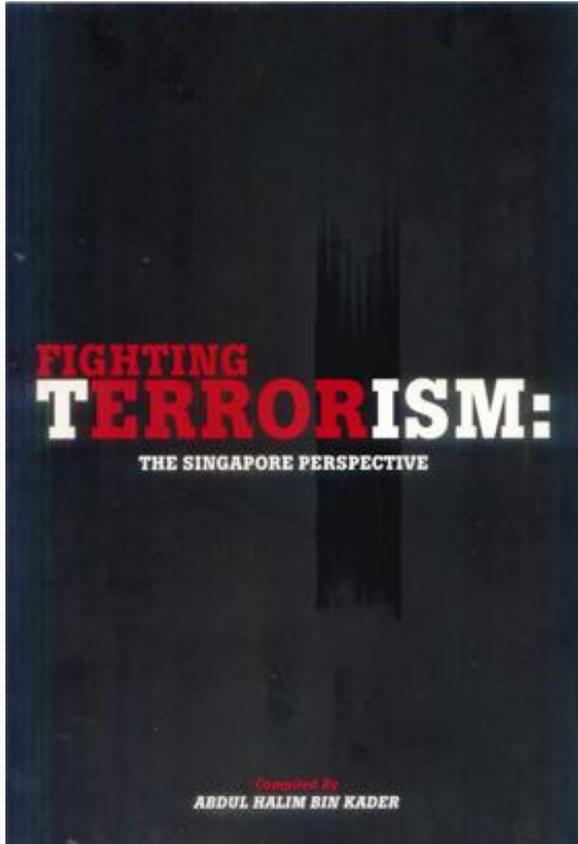
# *Malaysian Parliament: Institutionalised and Indigenised Democracy since 1955*



# Sharing of Power between Muslims and Non-Muslims



# MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN SECULAR SINGAPORE FIGHTING TERRORISM



## CONT...

They naturally felt offended when the Mentor-Minister Lee Kuan Yew says in his biography *Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going* (2011): “I would say today, we can integrate all religions and races except Islam...I think we were progressing very nicely until the surge of Islam came and if you asked me for my observations, the other communities have easier integration — friends, intermarriages and so on...” ([leewatch.info/2011/.../lee-kuan-yew-urges-muslims-to-be-less-strict/](http://leewatch.info/2011/.../lee-kuan-yew-urges-muslims-to-be-less-strict/)).



Source: Voice of Islamic Moderation From the Malay World, 299-301

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