

A time for making sacrifices

Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Article

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WITHIN the span of a week, almost the entire world has embraced the spirit of sacrifice, caring and forgiveness. Hari Raya Aidiladha, which was celebrated on Dec 20 by Muslims all over, is an unequivocal symbol in the Islamic tradition.

The "Festival of the Sacrifice" commemorates Prophet's Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice one of his sons, Ismail (Ishmael), as a sign of obedience to God's commandment. He was further encouraged by his son's acceptance of God's ultimate test of faith.

As they remain steadfast, God in His Wisdom and Compassion spared Ismail such that Ibrahim's knife fell on a lamb instead, a substitute for his son. In many ways, it is also a mark of sanctity of human life among Muslims and for humankind.

More so, when the meat of the slaughtered animal used in the sacrifice is shared and distributed to the needy, the less fortunate and destitute, again in line with the divine sanctification of human life.

This highly meaningful and devotional act is now a universal practice in the Muslim world and serves as a firm reminder as such sacrifices are carried out during every Aidiladha.

The historical incident which unfolded centuries ago near the vicinity of Mecca is now the climax and an obligatory part of the haj — Islam's most solemn act of atonement.

The Bible too speaks of the same incident, although it recorded Isaac (Ishak) as the subject of sacrifice instead.

No matter, the lesson still remains the same, that is, one of sacrifice and undivided devotion, even if it does not feature as such a major event like Aidiladha.

For the Christians, Dec 25 is a more widely celebrated festival to mark a similar Christmas message.

The Bible teaches that Christ gave his life as atonement of the original sins for the sake of salvation of humankind.

And as the entire Christian world gathered around for the traditional homecoming, another Abrahamic message of sacrifice, love and forgiveness was reaffirmed.

Unfortunately, beyond these compelling events and celebrations, the call to make sacrifices has many times fallen on deaf ears.

Sadder still, it becomes twisted in interpretations of self-centredness, narrow communal interests or instant gratification.

Some are so well disguised that they appear as sophisticated arguments for unsuspected dubious agendas.

Their demagoguery appears so convincing that it tends to appeal to a wider audience of the uninitiated just so to realise their deceptive intent.

Just as in South Korea, this year could also be dubbed the Year of Living Deceptively.

Aptly, the Korea Herald has even a phrase for it: "ja-gi-gi-in", meaning, behaviour resulting from one's excessive desires.

As we cross into the New Year, this tendency must change. We must reclaim the true spirit of sacrifice, love and forgiveness as part of our lives.

The prime minister in his Aidiladha message underscored the need for the spirit of muafakat and caring to prevail once again, implicitly that of sacrifice, among Malaysians.

He urged Malaysians to make sacrifices as part of their faith which need not be confined only to times of festivity, for without sacrifice, no muafakat or caring can be enduring or lasting.

In fact, it will only allow the same tragic twisted interpretations to creep in yet again. And so the prime minister in his Christmas wishes re-emphasised the importance of moving forward and putting the country's

interests first.

What this country needs is our urgent attention and participation for sacrifice to protect it from not only the rising tidal waves of water but also irrationality and temperament.

There has never been a decisive moment for us to collectively act for the love of Malaysia. Indeed, this beloved country stands to be unceremoniously put down at the altar of intolerance and unreason.

It is most unlikely that the miracles that saved Ismail or Isaac will happen to anyone of us, ordinary mortals. The choice to do so remains entirely ours, God willing!

May we as a nation be brave enough to make the much needed sacrifices, like our forefathers did some 50 years ago.

Wishing all reader a joyous and everlasting peaceful New Year.

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