

COMMENT

An honour code to fend off hatred

GUIDE THE YOUNG: At a time when terror is on the rise and racial harmony at risk, our kids need to be taught right values

THERE is a range of motives regarding random and preplanned violence perpetuated by those who want to harm others. The variations have to be understood by the citizenry in these times of war on terror, extremism, supremacist ideology, cultural revenge and power struggles by all kinds of sects because of schisms in society.

Malaysia is not new to armed violence because of ideology. The Emergency (1948-1961) with stories of Bukit Kepong and other incidents are taught in schools and become popular subjects of stage and screen.

The racial riots of May 13, 1969, are often used as an example of a national tragedy not to be repeated. There were other racial riots in

Penang and elsewhere and other incidents like the Kerling Temple desecration and killings in 1977.

A visit to the Police Museum will provide glimpses of histories of Ghee Hin and Hai San and other active gangsterdom and Mafia-like leaders whose stories are not told publicly.

Some of those considered people on the opposite side of the law, like Botak Chin, are respected and emulated by the followers.

Violent crimes and domestic violence are reported daily. The Parliament building was targeted and the National Monument was bombed in 1975.

Malaysians were reported to be involved in the Bali bombings and Marriot bombings in Jakarta. The media now reports on the jihadists, all of whom can return with more skills and sophistication and networks of comrades.

The Bukit Bintang grenade attack on Oct 9, should not be seen as a one-off territorial feud among gangsters. It reflects the logic of willingness to use or demonstrate power through violence. What are

the major root problems in society, which make people intolerant and seek the extinction of others?

The incessant weltering of negative hate messages and supremacist arguments are ingredients for the nurturing of a culture of violence. Reckless hate messages orchestrated with immunity with no restraint set the conditions for crimes of hate. It just awaits irrational acts by some individuals or groups to create a sea-swell of unbridled turmoil.

Just imagine what happens when Chinese and Indian gangsters, Malay jihadists and supremacists act out their own private agenda, driven by their own motives.

In the circumstances, how would the predominantly Malay uniformed armed forces be able to handle racial and religious pandemonium? What is it that makes a person violent or a violent culture? Intention, doctrine and propaganda, indoctrination, resources, teams, agenda.

We have invested so much on education. What is it that edu-

cation can do to prevent the shift to a culture of violence?

Government and communities must have instruments and mechanisms to prevent the violent and hateful few from destroying society and nationhood. Institutions which must play balancing and reinforcing strong roles include families, schools, communities, media and organisations.

Does society and the silent majority exercise bold stances or cower with fear in the perception that they would lose privileges, material wealth and life?

Where is Peace Education and Non-Violence in our curriculum in schools and universities? How do our religious and moral curriculum handle the killing of mindless innocent people, in curricular contents, in discourses and in the teachings and opinions of teachers?

How do teachers handle the hardening of cognitive categories of students who begin to develop stances regarding "the end justifies the means?"

As more Malaysians get higher education, the profiles of those prone to organised ideological or criminal violence seem to be those who have education or miseducation. The battle is not about pun-

ishment after the fact, but the effective debates, clarifications and the resolutions of various controversial issues, in schools and universities before recruitment by sophisticated organisations in the Middle East, the subcontinent or countries like Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

Malaysian national and cultural character is gentle, harmonious and not confrontational or loud and aggressive. Malaysians from all ethnic groups are conciliatory unless pushed to desperate brinks.

The core elements of national character must not be changed through importation and imbement of loud, violent, non-tolerant, and non-conciliatory habits of other cultures we are in contact with.

Malaysians do not believe that the ends justify the means, especially, in killing innocent others who are bystanders and not in the field of combat. The code of honour of rational negotiation must be promoted in schools and the subculture of hate and xenophobia exorcised.

The younger generation needs to be educated in sophisticated ways to ensure that ideologues or Mafia groups do not entrap and use them.

ibaiw@yahoo.com



Datuk Dr Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid is deputy vice-chancellor of INTI Laureate International University