

## **Book Reviews/ Ulasan Buku**

*Challenging Times* by J.S. Solomon (ed). Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn.Bhd. 1982. 240 pages.

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*Challenging Times* explores former Malaysian Prime Minister i.e Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj's ideas in five major issues related to Islam. This book was published by Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn.Bhd and edited by J.S. Solomon. Its contains 240 pages altogether and divided into five chapters or parts which indicate the issues discussed. They are as follows:

Part One: Rulers

Part Two: Contemporary Politics

Part Three: Islam

Part Four: Profiles

Part Five: Riminiscences

On the first part of the book, Tunku expressed his ideas concerning on the role of the rulers an their sovereignty, the need to review the constitution and other issues including the involvement of royal families in drug abuse.

Part two highlights political issues in that time. Among them are UMNO's election, debate between two Malay major political party, UMNO-PAS, the questions of democracy and also Sabah and Sarawak Politics.

Several issues related to Islam like Islamic brotherhood, Islamic unity and da'wah institutions for example also discussed in the book. Prominent figures profile such as Kennedy, Mahsuri, Ghazali Jawi, Marcos and others presented in part four of the book.

The final part i.e part five concerned with Tunku's position as UMNO's President, his struggle for Malaysia'a independent and his

assignment as a member of civil servant in the state of Kedah especially as District Officer during the period of 1938-43.

It is a great importance to know Tunku's view on Islam. Speaking on Islam, Tunku had emphasized the need to educate a young generation with religious education based on scientific and systematic approaches. He criticized a few religious teachers who were tend to narrow down religious teachings that lead to to a young generation hard to follow. Tunku instead suggested that Islam is a progressive religion. Islamic teachings therefore should be presented wisely so as can be accepted by all.

Tunku as portrait in Challenging Times was very much concerned on the Muslim Brotherhood. This can be seen in his efforts to build relationship or networking with Muslim leaders at international level. His initiative in promoting the spirit of Muslim Brotherhood could also be seen when he joined Muslim countries Pact as Secretary General for The Secretariat of Muslim Country Foreign Ministers. Due to his great contribution in promoting Muslim Brotherhood, he was later conferred with the King Faisal International Award from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Hijrah ward from the Government of Pakistan.

In the context of da'wah, there were many practical approaches which taken by Tunku to ensure that Islam would be seen as progressive and dynamic religion, therefore accepted by all. Among the very practical approach of da'wah according to Tunku is through welfare. In this case, da'wah organization like PERKIM (Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia) to set up a clinic that can provide free treatment to all people, Muslims and Non-Muslims. He further suggested that media particularly TV plays a decisive role in disseminating the massage of Islam. In relation to this, he had expressed his regretfulness that TV failed to highlight da'wah works (through welfare) by PERKIM. Tunku of the opinion that by telecasting welfare activities, non-Muslims would be able to know that Islam is a peaceful religion. This is important for the sake of da'wah.

It is also interesting to note here that Tunku believed that da'wah could also be propagated effectively if the Muslims aggressively and systematically promoting Islam as a religion of peace, harmony and encouraging social welfare. These ideas were expressed by Tunku in two chapters, namely "Peaceful and Goodwill Through Islam" and "Peace for all Time"

There are also a chapter in the book viz. "No Room for Religious Extremism". In this chapter, Tunku criticized a group whose called by

Tunku as religious extremist. He claimed this particular group try to topple down the government and added that they were inspired by Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. Tunku further suggested that their extreme approach in establishing a new government might cause trouble and anarchy. However, his claim did not base on fact and figure. It was only Tunku's assumption. This kind of opinion might be due to his great concern on peace and harmony. Therefore, he believed that Muslims in whatever they do should be in a moderate basis actions.

On the whole, views and ideas of Tunku as presented in *Challenging Times* apparently revealed his understanding and attitude towards Islam. His ideas pertaining to Islam for example the concept of Muslim Brotherhood, Ummah solidarity, peace and harmony, Islam is a moderate and progressive religion are in line with syariah. His ideas and efforts of da'wah proved that he was very serious in uplifting the image of Islam.

*Challenging Times* therefore is very beneficial for all especially those who are involve in da'wah. Tunku's ideas concerning da'wah approaches was so precious. It is therefore, very important for da'I (preacher) to go through the book to get the idea how to implement da'wah effectively in modern times.

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