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All must strive to create Bangsa Malaysia

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ON Sunday, Malaysia celebrates its 40th year of nationhood.

As Malaysians of all races celebrate another year of independence, it is appropriate to consider efforts made so far to strengthen the foundation for a peaceful, harmonious and united Malaysia.

Malaysians must reflect on their contributions towards the creation of Bangsa Malaysia which was recently commented on by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It has been six years since Dr Mahathir first pronounced the concept of a Bangsa Malaysia as the first challenge outlined in Vision 2020.

The concept calls for a "fully united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny, a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and in full and fair partnership, made up of one Bangsa Malaysia with political loyalty and dedication to the nation".

Given the existing political and economic realities, can there ever be a truly integrated Bangsa Malaysia?

Is such a goal feasible given the multi-racial nature of our country? What has to be done in order to make that vision a reality and a success?

Dr Mahathir pointed out recently that there appeared to be some opposition to creating Bangsa Malaysia and efforts to achieve it were being stifled by certain quarters although he did not name them.

The Prime Minister pointed out that some people "are even against calling the national language Bahasa Malaysia, insisting the language should be known as Bahasa Melayu".

These comments clearly indicate that the task ahead is confronted with various obstacles.

When people talk about unity these days, there is a tendency to mean tolerance. And some say Bangsa Malaysia just means "even greater tolerance".

I am sure Dr Mahathir's Vision of Bangsa Malaysia goes beyond mere tolerance. His vision, I believe, spells the sum total of a common, shared responsibility and peace.

It is therefore incumbent upon all Malaysians to appreciate the importance of achieving a Bangsa Malaysia despite the challenges, the difficulties and the opposition.

Clearly, a sense of Bangsa Malaysia must be inculcated in the minds of all individuals, particularly the younger generation.

There is a need to do away with the requirement in all forms of documentation where race is used to categorise someone.

The people should be proud to identify themselves first and last as Malaysians, for such identification fosters patriotism and develops national unity - one of the objectives of Vision 2020.

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