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Challenge for the new generation

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IN 1969 if anyone had predicted that there would be good, if not totally harmonious relations between the different races in Malaysia, he would have probably been laughed into silence. It was unthinkable. There was so much bitterness. Many non-Malays left the country.

The Press even said that there would be periodical clashes between the races in the future. The country would be politically unstable. A very senior Government Minister publicly declared that democracy was dead in Malaysia.

Yet look at the scene when the nation celebrated the 40th National Day recently. Everyone, Malays, Chinese, Indian, Ibans, Kadazans, etc, celebrated the event together, apparently quite harmoniously. Everyone cheered the National flag, decorated their cars and houses with it, carried it and waved it enthusiastically.

A multi-racial crowd gathered on Merdeka Square, mixing freely without any sign of fear, completely confident that no one would do any harm to anyone because he is of a different race. They cheered and they sang patriotic songs and roared their approval of the multi-racial runners who came from every corner of the country bearing the flag proudly.

Could anyone have imagined this scene on May 13, 1969 or the immediate years after. That this scene has now become common place year after year is testimony to the incapacity of mere mortals like us to presume and predict. Even guesses are very often far off the mark.

But I am going to try and predict the future since I was asked to. It is a mere guess of course but I do expect some parts of it would come true.

Since what will happen to Malaysia will be very much influenced by what happens to the rest of the world, it is necessary to forecast the future of the world first.

There is no doubt that much will change in the affairs of the world. Already we are talking about the global village, about a world that has so shrunken that the world society will, to a certain extent, at least be liked a village society - a society in which everyone would know everyone else and so would be constantly treading on each other's toes.

The global village is the result of the speed of communication - physical movements of people and goods and of information of every kind. Already today it takes less time for us to travel to the other side of the globe than it takes people to move through the clogged city streets.

There was a time when it took 21 days for a mail streamer to sail from Port Swettenham to London. It now just takes 13 hours. Of course if you take the Concorde from London to New York you would arrive before the local time you left.

But it is in the transmission of information that amazing speeds have been achieved. As has been mentioned it took 21 days to send news by mail from Malaysia to London. Today letters and pictures are transmitted instantly. On the Internet one has only to click "send" and the message would reach any part on earth.

Teleconferencing makes it seem that distance does not exist at all. The Internet enables everyone not just to receive information instantly, but all kinds of commerce and trade can be just as instantaneous. True, the goods will still take time to reach the destination, but that time is going to get shorter and shorter as more and more use is made of air transport. In the aviation industry the greatest growth is in cargo

transport.

Huge delivery companies freed from Government monopoly are delivering everything door-to-door. One will not have to go to the shops to select the goods we wish to buy, but instead have them delivered to one's home, examine, accept or reject them and buy everything through electronic banks using electronic money which had been electronically transferred to our account every week or month.

All these will sound futuristic but some are already happening now. But ease of movement of people will result in massive migrations. People will move to where they expect to live a better life with jobs, better jobs and better social amenities.

The single ethnic countries will give way to multi-racial countries everywhere. No nation will be able to stop the inflow of foreign people without being accused of injustice and inhuman treatment. The world will become truly borderless and the countries will meld into one global entity.

The countries of Europe and North America, the most prosperous in the world will cease to be European in the sense of being white or Caucasian. Indians, Africans and Chinese will flow into European countries so that before even one century passes, Europe will no longer be identified with white people. Black and yellow and brown people will all be Europeans. Already European athletes are significantly black.

Initially these non-European immigrants will adopt the language and customs of the indigenous Europeans. But as their numbers increase they will tend to retain their languages and cultures.

Prosperity will not be confined to the indigenous Europeans. Asians will probably dominate the business activities of Europe, and Asians and Africans will make up the work force, especially when they retain their culture and work ethics.

But there will be other consequences. There will be clashes between the racial groups including of course religious groups. There will not be a clash of civilisation as that was predicated upon the different civilisations remaining separate.

Over time the peoples of different civilisations living in European countries are going to be closely intermixed. Confrontation between these peoples of different civilisations can only happen on a small scale and they will be unco-ordinated. The causes will be local rather than universal.

The scenes of ethnic repression in North America will be repeated in Europe as the large white authorities try to impose their standards and their rules on the new Europeans. But the whites will have to give in eventually until treatment of all "Europeans" of whatever colour would be the same. There is of course the possibility later on in the millennium when the non-white Europeans would dominate and would try to impose their will on the rest.

But clashes and confrontation will not be invariable, for the races will also inter-marry and integrate. More and more white men and women will be marrying or at least co-habiting with more and more blacks and Asians. Their offspring will have a variety of shades of black, white, brown and yellow.

An indeterminate hybrid race will emerge as of course has happened in some of the South Sea Islands. By the end of the millennium or even earlier it would be impossible to find anyone of pure white stock in Europe.

North America would go the way of Brazil where people intermix freely. However, Latin America will take a longer time as the American Indians have largely been isolated.

The countries which will have the biggest number of people of pure stock could be the Asians. They would be prevented from inter-mixing because of their numbers and their isolation even in a borderless world.

They will migrate to the less densely populated countries where they will determine the future character of the people there. But the numbers coming from Europe, Africa or Latin America into Asian countries would be small relative to the huge population of Asians in Asian countries.

The Chinese, Koreans and Japanese will remain the purest for a long time. They too will eventually be mixed but they will always be less mixed than the Europeans in Europe and in the Americas.

From these mixing of peoples and cultures, new cultures will evolve which will have many similar features. No culture would be really foreign or dominant. The hybrid races cannot be easily identified with countries or regions or culture. They will be the peoples of the Planet Earth.

Wars between nations will not be possible. In fact in a borderless world there will be no nation and no national loyalties to be involved in and to fight for. But there would be a lot of violence due to minor misunderstandings over issues, interpretations, esoteric ideologies and new group loyalties not based on race or nations. Such violence will be endemic and seemingly impossible to put an end to.

We are of course already seeing this phenomenon. The end of World War II has brought to an end the war between nations. For a time there was a Cold War in which the people of the Western bloc confronted the Eastern bloc people. Several times it looked as if the two blocs would wage war on each other. But fear of nuclear war and the massive irreparable destruction that it could cause was able to keep heads cool and war prevented.

But proxy wars were fought all over the world as one bloc instigated a third world nation to go to war against another third world nation believed to be supporting or was supported by the other bloc. Hundreds of thousands died as a result of these proxy wars. Much damage was done to property and the economies of these countries. Invariably both sides lost and found themselves unable to recover as they are abandoned by their patrons.

But proxy wars were not the only source of violence. Terrorist gangs threatened the peace and stability of many countries. The Red Army, the Baader Meinhof gang, the IRA, and assorted Muslim fanatics indulged in senseless violence, killing and destroying property and generally preventing peace and stability and economic development to take place.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina a vicious Serbian attempt to wipe out the Muslims was tolerated and at times inadvertently or deliberately aided by the big powers. About 200,000 Muslims and a much smaller number of Croats and Serbs were massacred or killed in one way or another.

The world closed its eyes as atrocities were committed. Where everyone was so quick to blame certain countries for violations of human rights, the self-appointed guardians of world morality decided not to see or do anything about the massacres blatantly committed by the Serbs.

In the field of trade there have always been pressures brought to bear on potential competitors so as to prevent them from competing fairly. Thus non-trade issues such as alleged human rights violation, environmental issues, workers rights, etc have been made used of to prevent emerging economies from growing.

Sanctions are applied to certain countries for alleged breaches, but if the countries do not pose an economic challenge nothing is done.

In African countries hundreds of thousands are massacred, or driven away from their homes and countries without the guardians of international morals doing anything to stop the carnage and the misery of the refugees.

During the proxy wars, diabolical weapons were developed and distributed

freely among the combatants. The great weapon trading nations wanted to test their weapons in real life situations.

Most of these weapons were paid for by the proxy countries. Proxy wars were thus profitable to the arms traders.

Among these weapons were the land mines. Millions of them were scattered throughout the world, killing and maiming innocent people long after the wars were over.

Attempts to outlaw these mines were opposed and rejected by the superpowers who are still bent on inventing, developing, testing and selling weapons, including the land mines. It would seem that some people feel that the world needs a cheap way of killing people.

The weapons race continue despite the end of the Cold War. New and more sophisticated weapons are continuously being invented, tested and produced for military forces which vie against each other in the sophistication of their murderous capability. If there are no enemies to fight for the moment, future enemies were identified in order to justify vast sums of money being expended on research, development and production of arms.

To recoup their vast investment in arms production, the small countries were persuaded to buy. These countries do not foresee any attacks from anyone, but they were persuaded that they must keep up with their friendly neighbours who have been persuaded to equip their forces with certain weapons. And so they too buy ever more costly weapons. And when they do this the media from the weapons trading nations condemn these countries for carrying on an arms race.

All these that I have related are happening today. In this area the future will not change radically from the present. The next century, the next millennium will see all these things continue to happen. They may be variations but only in degree and sophistication. Otherwise history will repeat itself.

When World War II ended there was great hope for the shaping of a more equitable international relationship. The United Nations was set up so as to bring conflicts to the negotiation tables rather than the battle fields. But that organisation has been taken over by the big powers and made into an instrument of their policy.

There is now no effective United Nations in so far as the maintenance of peace and the problem of equality and justice between nations. However the good work of the United Nations in the field of health and agriculture mitigates against the United Nations' uselessness in maintaining peace, justice and fairplay.

How the United Nations will function in a world without borders is anyone's guess. But it is certainly not going to be more effective than it is now. It will continue to be an instrument of the big powers.

What happens to the world will affect and influence Malaysia's internal and external affairs. Malaysia is today much more integrated with the rest of the world than ever before. Our economy is inextricably linked with the economy of the world. And because of that our policies and our social life too will be influenced by what goes on in the rest of the world.

At one time the world was to us a few countries with which we had trade and political relations. The United Kingdom, two or three major European countries, the North American countries and Japan in the East were our with the Eastern Europeans, the Central Asian countries, African countries and Latin American countries.

Our trade is no longer confined to selected countries. Indeed trade with the countries of East Asia, including Southeast Asia, is likely to be the biggest portion of our total trade in the future. This is not because we do not want to trade with Europe and America. The fact is that European and North American countries have already matured. Their growth will be

small in terms of percentage, although in absolute terms it will still be quite big.

On the other hand, the countries of East Asia are in the early stages of their growth and their potential for expansion is very much greater and more rapid. A small increase in per capita income of China would amount to a very big purchasing capacity for that country.

Malaysia will be truly a world trader, producing manufactured goods of every kind for export and buying raw materials and components in exchange.

Politically Malaysia is likely to maintain its independence. It will not belong to any group and its policies will vary according to its perception of what is right and what is wrong.

But domestically Malaysians will continue to go against conventional wisdom. Since 1970 Malaysia set off to do things as it thought best for itself.

Beginning with the New Economic Policy which was roundly condemned by the rest of the world for being openly discriminatory, Malaysia has been bucking the trend every time all the time. But fortunately for Malaysia most of these contrary policies and methods have been successful.

Thus when the world condemned the Japanese for the Japan Incorporated concept, Malaysia actually adopted a Malaysia Incorporated concept as an approach towards facilitating economic development.

With the Malaysia Incorporated concept was launched the biggest privatisation programme ever tried by any country. When it was launched in 1983 and 1984 privatisation was still not fully accepted by most countries of the world. Several European countries tried it and gave up. But Malaysia plunged headlong into privatisation so that many departments, companies and functions of the Government were transferred to the private sector.

One startling feature of Malaysia's privatisation is that the workers actually support it. Privatisation not only speeded up development but it actually helped to fulfil the objectives of the NEP by creating big Bumiputera corporations to match those of the non-Bumiputera. And these Bumiputera corporations succeeded as few expected them to succeed.

The result of going against conventional wisdom is to make Malaysia stable politically and successful in its industrialisation and economic development. Despite repeated attempts to destabilise the country, Malaysia is likely to overcome them and to continue to prosper.

So what is the challenge for the new generation? Obviously it is to continue to maintain the political stability and economic development of the nation. But the task will not be as easy as the initial years.

We already see complacency and a desire to sit back and enjoy life. Lepak, bohsia, drug usage, etc will undermine the resilience and the determination of the young Malaysians. Work ethics will deteriorate.

As in the developed countries the demand will be for more pay and less work. Incredibly the same trend towards decadence as seen in Europe will also be seen in Malaysia.

But apart from internal deterioration, there will also be outside pressures. As affluent Malaysians reject certain kinds of work, more foreigners will immigrate into the country. At first they would come only to work. But soon they will settle down and demand rights including citizenship. Malaysians would want to deny them these rights but the rest of the world will apply pressure. Eventually there will be accommodation.

We have seen recently how rogue speculators had destroyed our economy in the process of enriching themselves. This will happen again and again. If we look like attaining Vision 2020 our politics and our economy will be undermined. Malaysians will be used also for this purpose.

Political pressure on Malaysia will be increased. Western concepts of

democracy in which the individual is supreme will be imposed on Malaysia. Political instability and frequent changes of Governments will characterise the Malaysian scene.

Most of the youths will be subverted. Only a few will resist. Repeated attempts will be made to restore the Malaysian spirit, the spirit of Malaysia Boleh. There will be protracted struggles between the patriots and the worldly youths. Who will win? That will be the question as well as the challenge.