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Maintain national unity

THIS nation was forged out of diversity. There was a lot of give and take and compromises for it to come into being. In short there was a social contract of sorts. The Malays gave in to persuasion to make their country a multi-racial one and they in turn were assured of some other rights.

Other bumiputras also enjoy these rights which came to be known as Malay rights. Thus the nation came into being. There were many Doubting Thomases then who said the bond was too fragile for the new nation to remain so for long.

It is more than four decades now and the nation has not only survived but is progressing, developing and prospering. Of course it was not plain sailing all the way but we have grown. Four decades may not be long in the history of a nation but we have had our fair share of problems which sometimes even threatened the very foundation of nationhood. But they are growing pains. We are certain to experience more pains as we grow. Let us regard these as pains and not as attempts to rent asunder what we took decades to nurture.

The Suqiu (Malaysian Chinese Organisations' Election Appeals Committee) has made certain demands which go against the very basis of this nation. Thus, it is understandable for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to reiterate an earlier statement likening Suqiu's actions to that of the communists who wanted to abolish the special status of the Malays.

He made clear that his criticism was directed only at Suqiu, especially certain leaders of the group, although these people and the Chinese language newspapers had made it appear that he was criticising all Chinese.

To those who are offended, he apologised. It comes as a great disappointment, nay, abhorrence, that there are people who will distort the Prime Minister's statement on such a sensitive issue resulting in suspicion and mistrust.

Having scant regard for the ban on raising sensitive issues and disrespect for national policies is not becoming of a citizen. National unity is of paramount importance and in a multi-ethnic society such as ours, giving in to such demands will open a floodgate of contentious issues which will threaten to unravel all that we have done to knit together this nation. It will also undo what has been agreed upon by our founding fathers through quiet compromises and consensus.

In forming this nation all the communities sacrificed certain rights and all of it came together in an unspoken social contract. It can be viewed as the basis of order and stability, loyalty and obedience to a Government fair to its citizenry. In essence, it is a quid pro quo whereby concessions and compromise are the order of the day.

Taking this further to present day society, what is it that our citizenry want at the end of the day? The Government of the day has a development agenda which no social, political or cultural evolution can supersede. The lines are clearly drawn and all communities accepted this when the leaders sat down to talk of their future and the future of their homes more than 43 years ago.

The administration cannot eschew the economic concerns that have brought progress and development to the country and given a more meaningful quality of life to the different communities.

The Government just cannot accede to Suqiu's demands. To do so would be

undoing the foundation laid by our forefathers. Assenting once will also mean that there will be no end to similar demands by other communities.

Considering the prevailing social and political circumstances, it is imprudent to raise such issues especially in a society such as ours. To quote Rousseau, Man has to "consult his reason rather than study his inclinations" and this is not a sacrifice of his true interests.

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