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Let us take up challenges together

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THE events following the Nanyang takeover, for example, show that the people are no longer a group following our leaders without question.

I hope that the party leadership can see this as a good development since when we clamour for higher education, we actually want the people to begin to think and differentiate between issues.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his speech at the Umno general assembly, referred to the need to see the "bigger picture".

Most of the time, we spend time and energy bickering over who should get more "limelight".

We often forget the basic reasons why we began an effort in the first place.

The basic duty of the politicians is to serve the people and raise issues that are of relevance and concern to the nation.

They should stop being personal and see how they can agree to be different in finding solutions to various issues.

It is necessary to work at solutions like mature adults for the good of the people. We have to begin to work in a concerted manner to conserve resources, instead of duplicating many efforts on the ground.

There is a need to take up the many challenges and for diverse groups to work together in a harmonious manner for the good of the nation.

It is only when as a nation we can see the vision of progress together that everyone gains.

The demand by one group that there is only one way to progress shows immaturity and an unwillingness to compromise. A good leader knows that differing opinions need not mean disloyalty or creating dissent and he/she will know how to negotiate the different groups into a path of agreement.

Rather than finally having to resort to a "yes" or "no" situation, issues can be resolved more professionally at the onset. The few who dared to disagree with the party leadership on the Nanyang takeover should be congratulated for daring to raise issues.

They, in fact, represent the voices of the silent majority who want leaders to take up issues. For too long, elections have been based on sentiments rather than effective leadership. I would like to highlight some issues and challenges confronting our nation and urge that we work together, otherwise, Malaysia as a nation may "disappear".

We have become a nation of greedy people; ask any youth and his/her answer will be to get rich quick, regardless of the consequences.

Somehow, with both parents going out to work, and having less care and support available, we have taught them to grow up quick and be rich and independent.

The basic joy and value for living seems somehow lost. Our boys are doing poorly in schools and in universities/colleges. If we do not focus on the issue now, we will soon have a nation of females as many of the males (as my student tells me) will be in drug rehabilitation centres or in jail.

Everyone seems to be passing the buck, from parents to teachers to the government and back. We all love our sons and men and we need to do something together to confront the issue.

There is a need to work at enforcement and building a support structure that would allow families to function and children to grow up safely.

Women need to go to work without feeling guilty that there is no one

overseeing their children. Children need love and to feel they are wanted and needed.

My main suspicion is that many boys are playing truant and they spend long hours in cybercafes. Cybercafes are good for the general public but they need to be monitored closely especially during school hours.

It is necessary that schoolchildren be given a certain limit in the number of hours they can spend in such places. Patronising cybercafes has become addictive to a wide number of schoolchildren, especially boys.

At home, it is also necessary to monitor children's access to the Internet and the number of hours spent chatting uselessly.

Construction has emerged all over and it is easy enough to find a contractor for renovations and such like but difficult to find one responsible to rectify faults. Repair and maintenance seem to be a thing of the past because, in part, we have lost a lot of the basic skills, but largely due to the fact that it is difficult to make fast bucks here.

Access to basic health services should be a basic right. The development of health services shows that the rich will have more right since they are able to access the best in the private sector. Public hospitals are crowded and, if we care to visit, mainly by older people who wait for long hours to see the doctor.

It is not that the old are more likely to fall sick but if you have no other choice you would have to wait in Government hospitals. I am sure none of us wants that to happen to us but if we do not urge for a more equitable system of having access to the private health sector as well, the situation will deteriorate further.

With the ageing of the population, most of us will live for as long as 40 years in old age, if not more, and health will be a main issue of concern.

With insurance companies now discriminating against the old, access to the private health sector will be difficult. Perhaps, the private health sector can begin to assume some responsibility for care of older people by providing some clinic sessions at nominal rates.

The Government needs to consider seriously a health financing system before the quality of life in old age sees further deterioration.

The quality of our environment is another area that needs serious focus. We have to start spending money in sustainable efforts and not only begin efforts when the money is finished.

As in others, there is a need to tap available expertise and resources in a concerted manner and through a smart partnership of government, private and non-government agencies.

If our nation is to progress, let us take up the challenges together. Accept that we are different and work together for a better and more progressive nation. In the next election, vote for the representative who dares to raise issues, yet works hard with others for the people!