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Restoring Malay unity

UNITY is strength. It is our national motto. And it follows that divided we fall. Malaysians, and Malays in particular, seem to have forgotten the wisdom of these simple sayings. Our leaders have reiterated time and again that the Malays must remain united as on this is based the unity of this nation.

There have been repeated calls for the Malays to repair the unity battered by recent political events. Given the gravity of the situation, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has himself expressed concern over the split among the Malays and has said Umno is prepared to initiate discussions with Pas and Keadilan to restore Malay unity. It is heartening to note that Pas president Datuk Fadzil Nor and Keadilan president Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail have reacted positively to this suggestion. Some people may still have their reservations about any meeting between Umno, Pas and Keadilan to discuss Malay unity because of their different motivations. However, given Umno's record in its struggle for the Malays, there is no question but that its intention to restore Malay unity is genuine.

If it is held, for such a meeting to yield positive and constructive results, there should be all-round sincerity, a willingness to listen and to keep an open mind. The last thing that anybody wants is just to score debating points in such a meeting.

Malaysia has progressed remarkably since independence because of the unity of its people despite its various races. The reality, if we need to be reminded again, is that the bedrock of this unity is the unity of the Malays who comprise the major racial group in the country. If Malays are persistently squabbling among themselves and cannot agree on what their political agenda should be, it would be difficult to forge national unity among the various races in the country.

Independence was won because the Malays were united in struggling for this objective. Because of the unity of the Malays under Umno in this national struggle, the other races were inspired to work together with the Malays to win freedom from the British colonialists.

This same formula of national unity with Malay unity as the foundation - under the former Alliance and its successor the Barisan Nasional - has worked well for us since independence. It has brought us political stability, economic growth, foreign investment, re-distribution of income and wealth and a sense of national purpose.

However, of late, not only many Malays but many sober-minded persons in the other communities as well, have watched with disquiet and even at times with trepidation, the division in the Malay community and the long-term implications to the nation if it continues unabated.

What affects the Malays will ultimately affect the other communities. Therefore the issue of Malay unity is not only of concern to the Malays alone but to the other races, too. The Malay leadership must realise that the other races look to them for strong and effective leadership of this country.

If the leadership fail in sincerely finding ways to re-unite the Malays, no matter how difficult the task is, then they are failing not only their own community but the other communities too and thus the nation as well. Malay disunity will weaken the Malays, threaten political stability and weaken the nation. Thus, the Malays have a heavy responsibility entrusted

to them.

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