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Silent majority should speak up

Y.C.L.

WE hear the Chinese education groups harping on about preserving the characteristics of Chinese schools. Before going any further, perhaps we first need to be clear about who is a true Malaysian Chinese.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has rightly pointed out that a Malaysian Chinese is not a China Chinese, a Hong Kong Chinese, a Taiwan Chinese or even a Singapore Chinese.

So are these Chinese schools, operating with their time-preserved "characteristics", producing the type of Malaysian Chinese needed to move the country forward in unity? Should not these characteristics change with the times?

A Malaysian Chinese educated in the "characteristic" ways of the 50s is unlikely to triumph in the present era. Change is necessary.

Would the Chinese education groups care to find out what happens to the children from Chinese primary schools after they enter national secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan)? Many are very weak in Bahasa Malaysia.

Some get through the Form Three examination (PMR) simply because the papers are of the objective type. But when they reach Forms Four and Five and have to face the SPM examination, it is different.

Many teachers will testify to the big number of students from vernacular schools who can't grasp the subjects because of language problems. How many drop out because they can't cope with the language?

Would anybody care to provide the statistics on this sad state of affairs?

My point is the Chinese schools, in their "characteristic" ways, have not been successful in producing enough students proficient in Bahasa Malaysia for mainstream secondary education.

The Chinese schools have yet to succeed in preparing their students for the same UPSR Bahasa Malaysia papers as the national-type schools. If the Chinese schools are to continue in their "characteristic" way, I shudder to think how the typical Chinese students will fare when they move to secondary schools where English will be used for teaching Science and Mathematics.

Do the Chinese education groups, in opposing the use of English for Science and Mathematics in Chinese primary schools, truly have the long-term interest of the children at heart?

I believe the silent majority of Chinese want their children to know Mandarin, but not necessarily to be Mandarin scholars. Let the schools proceed with the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English. At the same time, ensure that Mandarin is also taught.

Then let's see where the majority of Chinese parents will send their children for primary education. The success of Vision Schools is a very good indicator.

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Seremban

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