

02/09/2002

Ensure Merdeka means peace and unity among the races

Lee Lam Thye

MALAYSIA commemorated the 45th anniversary of its Independence on Saturday. We have been independent for over 45 years.

Although the nation may not be perfect, it has weathered many storms and laid the foundation for the attainment of racial harmony, unity, cohesiveness and political stability which many other countries, including the developed ones, are envious of.

Let us not jeopardise what we have achieved so far through the spirit of understanding.

Let us not allow the politics of extremism to divide the nation which we love and care for as this is our birthplace, our home, our workplace and eventually our final resting place.

As Malaysians of diverse races celebrated Independence Day, let us spare a thought for its significance and what "Merdeka" means to us.

The Merdeka month celebration can promote unity by rallying Malaysians of all races to be involved in the activities of this very auspicious occasion.

Celebrating it is significant at a time when Malaysians must not take harmony and unity for granted.

As unity is so vital for the survival and success of our multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural nation, I wish to offer some suggestions on how to bolster unity, particularly among the younger generation.

Recently, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called for the formation of interracial clubs in universities to address polarisation.

Giving priority to this is a welcome move as this will promote interaction among the different races and lead to greater inter-racial understanding.

Existing single-race-based organisations should organise activities and invite other races to participate in order to pave the way for interaction.

Groups intending to register new societies should be encouraged to include all races in their organisations.

While it may not be feasible to compel all those who intend to form societies to include all races, it is advisable in the interest of unity and understanding to encourage them to have a multi-racial membership.

I am of the view that many voluntary non-governmental organisations should be encouraged to have better multi-racial representation.

Multi-racial composition and participation in voluntary bodies will enhance unity and promote co-operation.

What is important is that serious efforts be undertaken to enable interaction among the students and address the issue of polarisation in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as well as institutions of higher learning.

It is imperative the young should be exposed to the Rukun Negara - our guide for nation-building and for unity.

The five principles are belief in God, to king and country, upholding the Constitution, Rule of Law, good behaviour and morality.

These principles, which have enabled Malaysia to unite her multi-racial and multi-religious people and form the basis of our nationhood, should be embedded in our younger generation.

Unity cannot be achieved through legislation.

Unity must come from the inner self. It must be voluntary.

The people of diverse races who have made Malaysia their home must realise they have no alternative but to live harm-oniously and peacefully with one another.