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Racial unity still weak

Hassan Talib

IN the 45th year of our independence, we are still talking of national integration. Of late, various quarters have been harping on this contentious issue with emotions and racial undertones.

What has happened? Probably it is a reflection of the inherent weakness in our education system. Our policy-makers must acknowledge this fact by making a concerted effort to rectify it.

The introduction of the national-type schools with Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction has ironically contributed to the problem of national integration. Being a multi-racial country, it is only natural that some Chinese and Indian parents prefer to send their children to Chinese or Tamil schools due to cultural reasons and perhaps in the belief that the national-type schools would not be able to produce a resilient personality as opposed to a vernacular school. This belief is no more a myth as evidenced by the increase in enrolment of Malays in Chinese schools.

Under the statesmanship of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the young generation born in 1981 (the year Dr Mahathir became the fourth Prime Minister) had taken national integration for granted. Now one finds that almost every facet of life is drawn along racial lines. Something drastic and effective needs to be done.

Of course language alone will not help in national integration. Even Singapore has failed to create the "Singapore Identity" as announced by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong some time ago.

While we are very good at the international level fostering international brotherhood, it is high time that our leaders spent more time looking into the racial powderkeg before the fuse inadvertently gets