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The white rajah

FOR all the things it stands for, the United Nations, which is supposed to uphold equality as well as multi-racial and multi-religious principles, should ponder over the internal developments at its mission in East Timor if the allegation of racism is true.

The accusation was made by Datuk N. Parameswaran who quit as chief-of-staff of the UN Transitional Administration in the territory eight days before the expiry of his contract.

The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, commented that Parameswaran's reason for resigning seemed to be justified, but he could not say whether racism is inherent in UN missions worldwide.

Parameswaran says that UNTAET, despite having to deal with a population that mostly speaks Bahasa Indonesia and practises eastern culture, has become "an Eastern mission with a Western face".

It is no secret that countries with clout, mostly from the West, try to dominate all activities. It may also be useful to review the racial composition of employees in the world body. Ideally, they should be more representative of the member states.

In the present case, steps must be taken to recruit and despatch people who speak Malay/Indonesian and know more about the region or in Parameswaran's words "the psyche of East Timor's most important neighbour, Indonesia".

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