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**PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES:**

# National Unity



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## PREFACE

Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF) through its collaboration with the Institute of Knowledge Advancement (InKA) UiTM aspires to make the Foundation premise in Putrajaya a hub where knowledge on our Premiers' unique leadership styles: how their thoughts, transpired through their attitudes, behaviors and performances are discussed, analysed and shared. The Institute of Knowledge Advancement (InKA), UiTM was contacted to provide assistance in this endeavor. Dr Kamaruzaman Md Zain of Sapura Holdings, acted as the intermediary between PLF and UiTM. He was instrumental in making this project a reality.

Starting from early December 2003, a number of meetings had been held between InKA, Sapura Holdings and the late Tan Sri Azizan Zainal Abidin, the first chairman of the foundation. Tan Sri shared with us his momentous moments with Tun Mahathir and the rest of the past prime ministers. His assertions on how important it is for us to help document events, accounts and unpublished thoughts of our past leaders never failed to motivate us to work on this project. His justification was to ensure continuity in sharing the right knowledge about what had happened, in the cause of building the nation for the benefit of our future leaders and community. The sudden demise of the late Tan Sri Azizan did not deter us from continuing with the agenda of realizing the discourse series. The first discourse started on smoothly with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivering an impressive keynote address on National Unity.

The session was followed by a discussant session, a presentation by Prof Emeritus Dato' Dr Khoo Kay Kim, Mr KJ John, Prof Col. Dato' Dr Kamarudin Kachar, and two students leaders, Saiful Azhar from UiTM and Siti Salwa from KUKUM.

In short, the Perdana Discourse Series PDS© 2004, InKA stands as an interactive platform of knowledge fusion amongst the older, the present, and the future generations. The platform is where the history of this nation and its current state are discussed, analysed and mapped in order to help create and form the future thoughts of the young.

Roziah Mohd Janor  
Institute of Knowledge Advancement, UiTM, Shah Alam

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This joint effort is a tripartite collaborative efforts of PLF, InKA-UiTM and the people. First of all, we would like to thank the Board of PLF and the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, Dato' Seri Profesor Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah, for having faith in InKA to co-organize this discourse series. We are very honoured to have Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad share his thoughts and ideas with us on National Unity. It is also our great pleasure to have Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Ali grace the occasion. A big thank you is due to Datuk Badariah Arshad for her assistance in chairing meetings and making decisions and who has successfully solicited PROTON Bhd to sponsor all the 10 planned sessions. A big thank you also to Profesor Dr Rahmat Mohamad, Assistant Vice Chancellor, InKA, for his support and involvement as the Discourse Manager for the occasion. We would also like to extend our thanks to the people who have supported us before, during and after the event, they are: Dr Kamaruzaman Md Zin - Sapura Holdings, Assoc. Prof. Dr Mohd Ismail Ramli, Encik Mohd Jamil Hj Mat Isa, Puan Umminajah Salleh, all from InKA, UiTM, Encik Azahar Mohd Noor from Petronas. A special thank you also to all InKA fellows that contributed as group facilitators, they are: Assoc. Prof. Dr Zaini Abdullah, Dr Zainab Mohd Noor, Tuan Haji Ahmad Suhaimi Ismail, Encik Faizul Abdullah and Ustaz Mohd Nor Mamat from UiTM. Last but not least, we also like to thank Perkasa Nilam Sdn Bhd for making the event a success.

A special thank you too, to all the participants who attended the discourse and contributed to the group discussions.

Editors

## FOREWORD

### **Tan Sri Dato' Azman Hashim**

For and on behalf of The Executive Committee  
The Perdana Leadership Foundation

We would like to wish a warm *Selamat Datang* to discussants, participants and guests to the Perdana Leadership Foundation and to our first in a sequence of events under the Perdana Discourse Series which commences on August 23, 2004.

The Discourse Series will be part of a string of activities featured at the Foundation. It is our hope that regular hosting of such intellectual discourse on topics that are uniquely Malaysian, will help identify modes pertinent to resolving issues related to nation building and the development of a civil society.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we would like to express our utmost gratitude to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his consent to grace the debut event and share his thoughts and views on the topic of national unity.

This series will not be possible without the support of various individuals and organisations including sponsors, partners and service providers.

We wish all of you a rewarding discourse series, the outcome of which we hope will enhance efforts in realising a better Malaysia for all.

## GREETINGS FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

of Universiti Teknologi MARA

### **YBhg. Dato' Seri Profesor Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah**

The Perdana Discourse Series on The Thoughts of Malaysian Prime Ministers is a collaborative effort between InKA, UiTM and The Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF). The series aim to initiate discussions among scholars, concerned public and future leaders on issues regarding nation building. We are very honoured to have our esteemed former Prime Minister, a man of vision who has contributed much towards the country's national unity and identity, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, to present his views on national unity in the inaugural discourse series.

Some of the issues that will be discussed will cover areas on the history of the country, race relations, the complexities involving the diverse ethnic communities, factors that have affected the political transformation of the nation, changes in the socioeconomic conditions and changes in political identity. Through discussions on these issues, we hope that the younger generation will be more exposed to the significant aspects of the nation's history and how some of these events have marked the critical junctures which have brought us to where we are today; an advanced, dynamic and modern multiracial society among developing nations.

At the end of the series, we hope to produce a Visual Map© that shows the progression of our country from the pre-independence era to the present time, relating to unity. This visual map can be used as a benchmark for students, educators, and leaders as reference for research as well as towards innovative applications to education. A monograph series of the discussions will also be published. The document will encapsulate the nation's idea of unity, her vision and mission as well as illustrate the way in which they relate to the present state of our nation.

I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to the organisers, InKA and PLF, for their efforts in making these discourse series a success.

## PROLOGUE

### PHILOSOPHY AND SOME POINTS ON NATIONAL UNITY

The concept of national unity takes on a distinct shade when viewed from a different angle, which is contingent to the colours that make up a nation and the outcome of the history of a particular nation state. Hence, the fundamentals of national unity in one country would demand observance of a different viewpoint from those of another country – the more diverse the colours of a nation, the greater are the challenges in shaping the nation so that it speaks in one voice.

Malaysia is a model of a nation that speaks in one voice in the face of its multifarious form. We are an example of a melting pot in which multi-ethnicity thrives in spite of differences in colour and culture. The leadership then and now has always strived to put aside among other things, the disparities in languages and traditions, and has instead, focused on the vision to build one nation that stands on common goals and aspirations.

The leaders and citizens of the past had sacrificed much of their life and time in order that Malaysians today may enjoy a better life.

#### Points On Unity

- National unity is the most important factor in developing policies in a multi-racial country like Malaysia.
- Historically, racial polarisation started during the time of the British Colonialisation as a result of their policy<sup>1</sup> of “divide and rule”. The Malays were left to remain in the rural agriculture sector, the Chinese in urban areas and the mining sector, while the Indians were mostly in the plantation sector.
- The formula used to address the issue of unity during the pre- Merdeka era focused on mutual agreement among the races and consensus building rather than coercion. Fighting for independence was not that difficult because all the three major races agreed to a common goal. However, what came after independence which was maintaining unity amongst the races, was the real challenge. The racial mix later became, and still is, part and parcel of Malaysia’s colourful ethnic make-up.
- Six years after independence, the people of Malaya were living in harmony

<sup>1</sup> Collin Abraham 2005, The Naked Social Order: The Roots of Racial Polarisation in Malaysia

except for the subversive elements that emerged from time to time and unsettled the community. The first challenge was the confrontation with Indonesia over territory and policy matters concerning the Chinese. However, the dispute was subsequently resolved. In September 1963 Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak became part of Malaysia but later in 1965, Singapore was granted independence.

- Then, national growth focused on rural development, which was perceived as giving abundant one-sided attention to the Malays. Wrong perceptions prevailed due to the lack of communication among the three major races. The deep-rooted economic segregation amongst them resulted in the feelings of fear and insecurity. The May 13th 1969 riot. The National Operations Council<sup>2</sup> was immediately set up to overcome this problem. One of the decisions made by the National Operations Council was to design a framework that would enhance a sense of shared purpose for all Malaysians. What followed was the creation of the Rukun Negara in 1970.

- The Rukun Negara<sup>3</sup> was designed to create a focus for the nation guided by certain principles. It in tandem with the New Economic Policy (1970) which aimed to eradicate poverty, irrespective of race and restructure the society to remove racial segregation.

- “Unity can only be durable if it rests on the basis of mutual regard and caring thoughts in terms of the other party”, said Ghazali Shafie (1974). Mutual agreement proved to be the success factor in the many rounds of discussion. Another factor contributing to unity then was the consensus to respect and tolerate each other’s culture and norms. This country has never practiced assimilation in addressing the issue of unity but utilized the concept of unity in diversity. Education, economic, social policies as well as the policy on technology were introduced to cater to all races in ensuring a stable nation. Facts like income disparity were considered to justify the need to make the economic cake larger to be shared by all. However, there were no advanced communication channels at that time. Due to this, matters that needed immediate attention were not dealt with and grew exponentially.

- Up to the time of Tun Hussein Onn’s tenure as Prime Minister, our focus was more on internal matters, building the nation from within. The direction however changed when Dr. Mahathir Mohamad took office in 1981. He wanted us to look not only at Britain, Australia or the United States of America, but also at Japan, Korea, Europe, South America, South Africa, the

Middle East countries, and Russia. Nevertheless, unity has never taken a back seat, even then. Vision 2020 designed in 1991 continued to instill unity amongst Malaysians. One of his wishes was to see the multi-ethnic society transform into a truly Malaysian race rich with its multi-cultural inheritance by the second decade of the 21st century.

- We need to analyse our readiness in order to chart another milestone in maintaining unity in the country.

<sup>2</sup> National Operations Council was set up immediately after the May 13 1969 incident.

<sup>3</sup> The Rukun Negara is a document that laid out the principles that need to be upheld by all Malaysian citizens.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS****Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad****THE QUEST FOR NATIONAL UNITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The idea of a nation state began to crystallise in 1500 A.D. Europe was then not yet divided into separate countries. Europe was governed by powerful warlords who ruled peasants living on lands which the former claimed as theirs. These peasants served the warlords as slaves and soldiers to fight for them for even more lands. The European communities were also ruled by a number of Roman as well as German emperors. As a result of the different emperors and rulers, the European communities were a mixed group of societies that comprised among others the Romans, Germans, Latin and Slavs. The European countries became recognised as they are today only after the 18th century when they were divided into different states by different rulers.

Many countries around the world had evolved much in the same way as Europe. There were no well-defined boundaries. The mixed groups of people lived wherever there were lands or came and conquered lands for themselves. The Muslim Empire known as the Land of the Ummah was not divided into different states. The followers of the faith lived as one religious group. The Chinese once ruled up to as far north as Siberia, while princes and maharajahs ruled India until the British colonials came and divided it into many states. Malaya was also once ruled by chieftains and sultans until the Dutch, Portuguese, and the British came and took over the local government and separated the Malay Peninsular into different states.

**The Essence of National Unity**

The movements and settlements of people lead to the formation of multiracial countries all over the world. They are made up of people of different origins, colours, cultures and languages. These societies of different communities usually experience problems like identification with the country because of their complex social backgrounds. When different races and cultures merge, there will be three different kinds of integration among the society:

- One culture will dominate and force other cultures to assimilate with it
- A single culture that results from a total integration of many cultures
- Different cultures that maintain their differences and do not assimilate with other cultures

**National Unity – The Case of Malaysia**

Malaysia has a very distinct mix of different ethnic groups. People from different races live together in harmony and over time have blended and adopted some aspects of other cultures from each other. For example, the hot and spicy Malay and Indian food are also favoured by the Chinese. The Malays are taken to using chopsticks when eating and people from different races enjoy *teh tarik* and *roti canai* at the *mamak* stalls. The differences are further diminished with mixed marriages among the different races. The Malays, Chinese and Indians who have their own ethnic characteristics have somehow blended and adopted the same culture which is uniquely Malaysian.

Political leaders (UMNO, MCA, MIC) have consented and agreed that Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) is spoken for better understanding in doing business among the various races. This is because the Chinese speak different dialects that are not understood even by some Chinese, and the Indians also speak in different tongues, also not understood by all.

Most Malaysians accept the need to sacrifice in order to achieve success for the integration of the nation. The people should adhere to the philosophy introduced by Tun Razak of sharing the economic cake which will continue to grow when shared by the population instead of having the cake shrinking when they have it all to themselves.

**Factors that Impede Efforts Toward National Unity**

There are extremists and purists who are bent on being “pure” and who do not tolerate any “impurities” in their culture. Many Chinese have lived in this country for generations who, however, still act as if they are in their own motherland and not in a new country that is Malaysia. Then, there are the Malay purists who insist that only Malay is spoken to the point of denying the access to knowledge. There are still many Malays who are not economically strong and who are not competitive. They still work on the old mindset namely the “*Ketuanan Melayu*” where they feel that Malay Reserve Land is

necessary. This old mindset created by the British Colonials works on the concept that if the Malay Reserve Land is allowed to be bought by the Non-Malays, eventually the *bumiputras* will not have any land at all. This fear will disappear if the Malays prosper and have the capacity to buy lands. Finally, it is important to cultivate the culture of savings among Malays. In order to equalise the competition among the races in Malaysia, it is important that the Malays adopt some changes to their culture and value system by working hard, cultivating the savings habit and acquiring knowledge.

A change of mindset is definitely incumbent upon the Malays. This will allow them to better compete with other races. When the Malays are able to compete, uncertainties and fears like having to hold on to Malay Reserve lands will disappear. In addition, more non-Malays need to join the government services. When all these are achieved, social integration will be faster and better.

Rapporteur : Masturah Alias

## DISCUSSANTS' OPINION ON NATIONAL UNITY

### Profesor Emeritus Dato' Dr Khoo Kay Kim

The subject of national unity has been much talked about since the first ethnic conflict in the country in 1945. The conflict, known as the Sino – Malay conflict, lasted for several months between the years 1945 and 1946. A riot started in Batu Pahat, and continued to Batu Kikir, Sg. Manik and Pantai Remis. It was more of a Chinese – Banjarese rather than Chinese – Malay conflict.

The second ethnic riot took place in the Federal Capital of Kuala Lumpur in 1969 between the Malays and the Chinese. The government took this riot more seriously than the earlier one that happened in 1945 as it started in the city. In actual fact the 1945 riot was more serious as it lasted longer than the 1969 riot. The difference between these two riots was that in 1945, there was little consciousness of the differences in the various ethnic groups.

Today, the problem that the country is facing is the feeling of discomfort amongst the various races. This can be clearly seen especially in the universities. Students of different ethnic groups do not mix well with each other. The problem the country is facing today is more cultural rather than racial.

How do we handle the problem of the ethnic divide that has arisen since 1945? A number of racial clashes like the Kg. Medan incident, and another in the 1980s between two political parties prove that there is still a potential threat of disunity amongst the races in the country. Although this situation can be dangerous, the country has always been able to manage the problem.

In order for the various races to live peacefully together, we have to promote the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia*. Most Malaysians do not understand the concept of Bangsa Malaysia. What is the Malaysian Race? This is because the word “bangsa” is equated to the word “race”. When a person has been exposed to different races (like Prof. Khoo himself), he will have no problems with ethnicity. If a person assimilates with a culture and speaks the language, than he becomes it.

Fate alone will not unite two ethnic groups. To quote an Indian economist

“To build a country, we first need to build a school”. We have to start addressing racial problems at the primary school level. Young people today know very little about Malaysia, even if they are highly educated and do very well in their examinations. Eventhough the 1955 Razak Report recommends that the main objective of the education system be national unity, many schools have not paid attention to the subject.

The question then, do we have the will to promote the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia*? Can we come up with recommendations for certain approaches to be experimented with? Ideas should be tested and results must be monitored. For example, classes on religion and Moral subjects are taught at schools but no monitoring is done. Moral values are only important in classrooms but are not practised on the football fields.

Malaysia has been very fortunate despite the setbacks during the Emergency period. Sports activities peaked at that time. However, times have changed. Malaysians now do not have to work hard for a living. One of the country's problems is complacency among the people. Young Malaysians today are happy-go-lucky. They are concerned about brand names and buying branded goods. Thus, there is a definite need for a change in the mind set.

Malaysians must realise that we are constantly being threatened by the outside world. We do not really understand the concept of globalization. We readily accept most things that the US is throwing at us. For example, the semester system that is used in many universities produces a lot of stress to the students and in the end students are not fully educated, know very little and are not creative in their thinking.

The time has come for us to make a radical change. The places to start this change are the schools and the teacher training institutions. Teachers need to understand their responsibilities and children need to be educated on national unity. There is no longer any need to learn by rote because information has grown tremendously. Things have to be done and we should not just make statements.

**UNLESS AN IDEA IS IMPLEMENTED, IT WILL NEVER BEAR FRUIT.**

Rapporteur: Masturah Alias

## TWO MEN, TWO WORLD VIEWS, ONE VISION

**K J John**

In a world of turbulence and chaos of the Post 9/11 variety where anarchy reigns and the war on terrorism prevails, we need a voice of moderation and peace for both racial and national unity.

Such was always the voice of *Bapa* Malaysia and in recognition and respect for his vision, we now call this capital city Putrajaya. I pray that 100 years after the birth of this nation, this vision will become the corporate vision of not only Malaysia but also 500 million people around the world, a vision of unity and harmony among people and nations instead of a clash of civilizations as Huntington has proposed.

Malaysia has experimented with multiculturalism in a context of multiracial, multi-religious, multi-ethnic nationalism, and is now regarded as a miracle nation for her multi-ethnic unity, but we are not the East Asian miracle of the World Bank variety nor the UNDP's star-child protégé of the millennium development goals. I have described it as Malaysian G.E.M. or Growth with Equity Model.

G.E.M. is an innovation in multi-ethnic nation building. Over the last 47 years, we have experimented with a slightly different model of nationalism than that known to most nation states. While our neighbours have experimented with assimilation, Malaysia with a British past and a Commonwealth heritage has avoided that and has sought unity within diversity, which we now call national integration.

Even this concept needed time to mature as shared by YAB Tun. That may be the precise reason why Singapore took the independence offered by Tunku Abdul Rahman. It was probably the same reason why Sabah and Sarawak helped us by staying on to realise the Malaysian nationhood after Singapore left us. National unity is the desired end-state but *Bangsa* Malaysia is the desired vehicle to bring us to that destination. The road to 2020 involves both the journey and the destination. If the Tunku's aspiration is not materialised, our Father of Modern Malaysia's vision cannot be built or developed.

The concept of *Bangsa* Malaysia has a national, nation state dimension. In both dimensions, there is a public, organisational face and a private face. The resulting two- by- two matrix establishes a framework to better appreciate a *Bangsa* Malaysia concept. Therefore, the most important feature of the concept of *Bangsa* Malaysia is our sense of identity.

My sense of identity is that I am a Malayali Malaysian. Both my parents are of Indian heritage. My “Malayaliness” and “Malaysianness” can never be taken away from me. Below my personal and public identity is my cultural identity; ways, preferences, (eat *nasi lemak*, wear *sarong* to bed).

I always saw myself simply as a Malaysian until 13 May 1969. On 12 May 1969, I suddenly became conscious of my community identity, translated into terms and racial loyalty issues because of the breakdown of trust and acceleration of racial issues and tension. I was identified as a non-Malay and a non-Chinese. It took me a while to fully realise that I was then an Indian and not even a Malayali.

At the peak of the racial riot, twelve of us from RMC organised ourselves into a vigilante *corp* and performed guard duty patrolling the campus area. This shows that at our very private and personal level of subconscious, we could exercise the choice of our attitude. We could choose to live behind our external, cultural and personal identity to focus on our larger community agenda that we call our national agenda.

Based on this framework of the concept of *Bangsa* Malaysia, there are four common challenges we must all face, taking into account the three- generational perspective; the pre and post independence and the new generation perspectives. The four issues are:

1. How do we continue to establish a common sense of purpose and destiny as Malaysians?
2. How do we ensure and experience social and cultural harmony as one community?
3. How do we protect the social, economic sense of inclusion and equity for all Malaysians, especially for those marginalised, regardless of race and religion?

4. How do we create enough democratic space so that all Malaysians can continue to feel like first class citizens, even if only within the constitution?

Rapporteur: Ainul Rusmin Ghazali

### Col. Profesor Dato' Dr Kamaruddin Kachar

Through all the years of post-merdeka, there have been concerted efforts by the government to promote national integration and unity. Examples of these are the national education policies like the 1956 Razak Education Report and Rahman Talib 1960 Report which brought about one education system where there are common syllabi, textbooks, system of teacher training, types of national examinations, school uniforms, structure of co-curricular activities and a centralized system of administration. One of the tools for national integration is *Bahasa Melayu* which is used as the main medium of instruction in secondary schools and in institutions of higher education. National ideologies, such as Rukun Negara (1970) and Malaysian Vision 2020 (1990), were also introduced to promote unity.

To a certain extent, all these attempts have been successful but more can be done. Forging national unity is an on-going social process. Among others, teachers should mould a patriotic and culturally sound nation starting from school. They must be aware of their socio-political duties. Today's surplus university graduates are not well developed in the true sense of the philosophy of Rukun Negara and the Vision 2020. There should not only be a focus on academic achievement and examination results but also on producing cultured and patriotic Malaysians. The national education system should incorporate theories and models on national integration e.g. administrative and leadership theories, social change, social adoption, social adaptation, social system, attitude change etc. It is a socialization process involving a system of inputs and outputs requiring a planned and supervised scheme. Otherwise, it becomes a society with an individualistic attitude, complacent and apathetic.

Heads of Departments in the government service, corporate and private sectors must also play their roles in promoting national unity and integration through a daily work programme. This must be introduced and done skillfully. Heads of Department have to know how to promote national unity and how often to do so as it is a continuous process that goes on even after students leave school and the university. This process of promoting national unity and integration must be implemented as soon as school leavers and graduates start working.

With the concerted effort and skills of all sectors, a greater degree of national integration and unity amongst the multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious population will be achieved.

Rapporteur: Associate Prof. Raishah Abd Hamid

**Saiful Azhar Shaharum****President of the Student Representative Council, UiTM**

What does National Unity mean to teenagers who will be future leaders of the country? What are the challenges and recommendations in order to strengthen national unity amongst the races in Malaysia? The term 'National Unity' was coined after the May 13, 1969 incident when MAGERAN or the *Majlis Gerakan Negara* founded by the late Tun Abd Razak Hussein began to address this issue.

There are four elements of national unity namely:

1. culture (language, customs)
2. religion
3. respect for one another
4. love for the country i.e. upholding the *Rukun Negara*

Are those other than the scholars, academicians and the educated in this country aware of national unity, the social development and political situation in the country? Thus, how do we promote national unity? The government has been doing so through the media, for example, through the Petronas advertisement on television that depicts racial harmony. The *Pakatan Murni* that existed even before this country gained independence had inculcated respect towards each other. In fact, all the previous Premiers had done a lot to promote national unity.

Unfortunately, teenagers in Malaysia are groping with the idea of national unity. Unlike the Indonesian students who do not know other meanings of the word *bangsa* except that it means "Indonesian", we are still identified as Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races.

Sadly, polarisation still exists in all universities in Malaysia. There is still no integration amongst students of different races there. Therefore, we need to research the causes of polarisation and solve this problem before it is too late. There is possibility that a threat such as that of May 13, 1969 will happen again if effective measures are not exercised to prevent polarisation.

In conclusion, some of the problems or questions that need to be addressed are:

1. What is the meaning of national unity to the common people?
2. Why are teenagers indifferent towards the idea of national unity?
3. How do we promote national unity effectively?
4. How do we deal with the lack of respect towards others of different races and societies in Malaysia?
5. How do we inculcate national unity amongst the younger generation who lack knowledge and are easily swayed by external influences?

Our previous premiers had given us independence. It is our duty to uphold the legacy for the future generation.

Rapporteur: Ainul Rusmin Ghazali

## The Impact of Government Policies on National Unity on the Young People

**Siti Salwa Mat Isa**  
Student Representative, KUKUM

It was the British policy to divide and rule Malaya so that there would be no unity amongst the races. Each race had its own occupation and lived in its own community in the post-merdeka era. This disunity led to the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1969 riot, which brought about the 1970 N.E.P. The Second Malaysia Plan created more job opportunities and reduced poverty which narrowed the economic gap amongst the races.

In 1971, *Rukun Negara* was formulated. It provided the basis for national unity. In addition, the introduction of a new education policy and *Bahasa Malaysia* as the national language would allow Malaysians to communicate better with each other. More recently the government introduced the *Sekolah Wawasan* to further strengthen national unity.

What is the impact of national unity on individuals especially the young people? There is still polarisation amongst university students where the majority have no interest in national unity and there is no respect for the other races. Steps have to be taken to overcome the problem of polarization amongst university students. Universities have to educate their students to respect each other in a move towards national unity. Students need to learn, understand and respect other cultures. Ethnic Relations should be taught as a subject. There should be activities planned and clubs formed to encourage mixing amongst the races.

The integration of races can be done at the course level at different faculties, placements in residential colleges along with co-curriculum activities such as *Senamrobik*, walkathons and dancing classes. Societies such as *Kelab Perpaduan* should also be formed. Activities such as these can instill the spirit of national unity.

Rapporteur: Associate Prof. Raishah Abdul Hamid

## PARTICIPANTS' POINT OF VIEW

Group discussion sessions were conducted in the afternoon, where more than forty participants contributed to the discussions. The group discussions focused on three aspects of National Unity in Malaysia: contributions of the Past Premiers, current Issues and Proposals for Future Development.

The summary of the three aspects are as follows:

### Contribution of the Past Premiers:

Reflecting on their thoughts, the group discussion came to a consensus that all past premiers had significantly contributed to National Unity and had put forward effective policies towards enhancing it.

#### Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra

He was seen as setting the foundation in harmonizing the three major races i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians. There was an indication of solidarity that was seen as beneficial in gaining independence from the British.

#### Tun Abdul Razak Hussein

He was responsible for raising the status of the Malays by introducing the National Economic Policy. The rural development scheme FELDA, was also introduced during his tenure. It provided opportunities to the Malays to be settlers in plantations. The other objectives of the rural development scheme were to counteract communist activities and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Another of his contribution was the Education Policy (the Razak Report, 1956), whose main objective was to promote National Unity.

#### Tun Hussein Onn

He was known as the *Bapa Perpaduan*. His policy was seen to strengthen unity among the three major races. He laid the foundation of building a Malaysian identity *Bangsa Malaysia*.

### **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

Malaysia experienced a rapid growth in economy during his twenty-two year premiership. National Unity has never been neglected because it is instrumental in keeping social stability across the nation. Social stability is regarded as a product of political stability. That will affect the growth of the country by 2020. National unity emphasized the development of vision schools, the national service and the increase in general prosperity helped to bridge unity amongst the different races in the country.

### **Current Issues on National Unity**

#### **Racial Polarisation**

Racial polarisation is still very widespread in higher learning institutions. It is less obvious in the work environment where perhaps race is less of an issue than work itself. What causes the situation in the universities is yet to be known. It could be the result of family background and ethnocentricity. If these are the root causes of racial polarization, then the solution lies in instilling racial tolerance in the home and early school environment. A sense of belonging, responsibility, and civic mindedness should be inculcated in the hearts of the young. Citizens of a nation should have common values and objectives. This can be done through our education system.

#### **Education**

Education is a means to rectify issues and improve situations related to national unity in Malaysia. Participants suggest that aspects on racial tolerance should be highlighted at various types of schools: National and National Type, religious schools, and private schools. They also suggest that at the system of education should be scrutinized, especially on evaluation methodology, so that education would not be perceived as being too examination oriented. They also reiterated that the homogenous environment in schools will give rise to racial bias. Participants suggest that unity be built on trust, comradeship, cultural understanding and tolerance.

#### **Economic imbalance**

Eventhough there is a significant improvement in the standard of living among Malaysians in general as compared to 40 years ago, economic disparity among the different races is still visible. Participants acknowledge that economic imbalance if left unmonitored, can result in misrepresentations of unity.

### **Communal identity and skewed perception**

The following are various aspects on issues at the community level highlighted by participants:

- Parents' perceptions
- Awareness amongst youth
- Education
- Critical thinking
- Civic and religious studies
- Any political parties with vested interests can cause disunity.

### **Proposals On How To Strengthen National Unity**

The group discussions put forth some proposals on how to address the issue of National Unity:

1. Enhance multiculturalism by introducing it as a compulsory subject in schools
2. Introduce a universal prayer at official functions
3. Emphasise English as a second language
4. Display appropriate attitude
5. Eliminate type schools-to maintain vision schools only
6. Instill values of unity at preschool level
7. Educate parents from all races on the positive benefits of unity
8. Enhance activities at the grassroots amongst all political parties
9. Restructure the Malaysian Education System
10. Re-evaluate the education system at the teacher training colleges
11. Strengthen national unity through the local councils  
eg. Activate neighbourhood watch
12. Ignore the 'sceptics' and push for national unity
13. Tackle polarisation problem from the home
14. Draft an action plan to understand inter-cultural practices  
eg. religious practices, integration of the different races, economic disparity amongst the different races and follow through with implementations

## EPILOGUE

### ONSET OF THE FUTURE PERSPECTIVE ON NATIONAL UNITY

The concept of unity in Malaysia can be viewed from many angles. Earlier it started with addressing unity among the Malays to fight for the rights of the nation during the era of Dato' Onn Jaafar. Later it became the issue of the three major races fighting for independence which resulted in the birth of the coalition political party. The coalition party later became the present ruling National Front.

The Perdana Discourse Series is intended to provide us with the opportunity to discuss the pillars of National Unity: the Rukun Negara, the New Economic Policy, and the Vision 2020. The roles of education, policy enhancement and family institution are extremely important in building national unity. Thus, this discourse provides a platform for the fusion of thoughts and ideas from at least three generations: the older, the present and the future generations.

Issues like racial polarisation in universities, income disparity index and differences in academic achievement amongst the major races in the country, should be viewed as early signals of disunity.

The objective of this discourse is to learn about ourselves, to share knowledge and to look at a fresh perspective in addressing the problem of unity in this country.

Malaysia's past prime ministers were very much dynamic, scientific and methodical in nature. Hence, it is envisioned that this series can assist in any research on knowledge of leadership.

## APPENDIX I

### PROFILE OF PRESENTERS

**Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad** was the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia. His 22 year tenure has made him the longest serving Prime Minister. Tun Dr. Mahathir obtained his early and secondary education in his home town. In 1947, he gained admission into the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore. Upon graduation, he joined the Malaysian government service as a Medical Officer.

Tun Dr. Mahathir has been active in politics since 1945. He has been a member of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) since its inception in 1946. He was appointed Chairman of the first Higher Education Council in 1968, Member of the Higher Education Advisory Council in 1972, Member of the University Court and University of Malaya Council, and Chairman of the National University Council in 1974. In 1973, Tun Dr. Mahathir was appointed a Senator but later step down in order to contest in the 1974 General Elections. Following the elections, Tun Dr. Mahathir was appointed the Minister of Education. On the 16th July 1981 he was made the Prime Minister.

He was the man behind the Malaysia's Vision 2020 that sets the sense of unified purpose and common shared values for the nation. One of his wish was to see the multiracial, multiethnic society to be transformed into a truly Malaysian race with rich sub-culture inheritances by the second decade of the 21st century. He has charted Malaysia onto the world map where many significant world events had been organised in Malaysia during his premiership, like the CHOGM, the 1998 Commonwealth Games, the APEC Summit, the NAM Summit and the 10th OIC Summit. Tun Dr. Mahathir ends his premiership on October 31st 2003 on a high-note that he wanted the country to further her achievement in every aspect: socially, economically, politically, technologically and environmentally.

**Prof. Dato' Dr. Khoo Kay Kim** is a well-known Malaysian historian. His current position is Professor of History, University of Malaya. He obtained his B.A. (Hons) in History and M.A. (History) in 1960 and 1967, respectively, from the University of Malaya in Singapore. He obtained his Ph.D in

History from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur in 1974.

Prof. Khoo began his career in the University of Malaya in 1964. He has held various positions in the University and was appointed Professor at the University's History Department in 1975.

Prof. Khoo was honoured with the J.S.M. (Johan Setia Mahkota) in 1983, and in 1987, he was conferred the D.P.M.P. (Darjah Paduka Mahkota Perak) which carries the title Dato'.

His publications include *The Transformation and Democratisation* (1971), and *His Majesty Sultan Azlan Shah: Biography* (1992). He has also written numerous history books which are used as texts in Malaysian schools.

**Colonel Professor Dato' Dr Kamarudin Kachar** is Chairman and Chief Consultant of Prished Consultants International, Kuala Lumpur. He is also an Adjunct Professor and Senior Representative (Southeast Asia) of Troy State University, Alabama.

He has a Degree (Hons) in Economics & Sociology from the London School of Economics & Political Science, University of London (1970), a Post-Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Administration of Primary Education), University of Leeds, and M.Phil (Administration of Secondary Education), University of London (1972). He earns his Ph.D (Administration of Higher Education) from the University of New England, Australia (1980).

Prof. Kamarudin has an illustrious career in the academia having served in numerous government agencies in various capacities at primary, secondary and tertiary level, from being a teacher to assuming the post of headmaster, principal, dean, professor and vice-chancellor, as well as director and director-general.

His involvement in voluntary organisations is multi farious. This includes the Malaysian Scout Movement, having risen to the rank of National Chief Scout Commissioner of Malaysia, and the Malaysian Territorial Army, having commanded Regiment 510 and 512, respectively. He is also a member of the University of New England (Australia) Alumni.

Prof. Kamarudin has researched and published nine books in the area of edu-

caional management and over 150 papers. He has been consultant and advisor to numerous government and professional agencies linked to specific educational programmes including the Felda Education Programme. He conducts courses and seminars on a wide range of topics including parenting education, school discipline and retirement planning.

He supervises postgraduate students and is examiner for Masters and Doctoral theses mainly from universities abroad. His areas of interest include attitude change, increasing staff productivity, self-renewal, developing self-esteem, staff motivation, managerial leadership and supervision, post-graduate teaching and supervision, and quality university management.

**K J John** was the Vice President (Strategic Interventions) of MIMOS Berhad (MIMOS is a government owned ICT R&D organisation) and was the National IT Council Secretariat from 1995 to 2003. John now heads the strategic Intervention Group Malaysia (SiGMA), a business initiative of MIMOS Berhad. SIGMA operates as a strategy consultancy specialising systems- level ICT4D strategy development and implementation via strategic interventions.

K J John holds a doctorate in Organisation and Management Theory from George Washington University Washington D.C. He has worked in Malaysian Civil Service for the past 30 years in strategic and tactical policy formulation especially in the fields of international trade, industry and development economics. His work experiences include training and human resources development, developing Malaysia's Second Industrial Masterplan and evolving Malaysia's National IT Agenda and the MSC, as the NITC Secretariat. He currently also manages a 150 million ringgit programme for the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment. He is a founder member of TiE Malaysia Branch and the Angles Club of Kuala Lumpur and Chairman of Knowledge Summit Sdn Bhd, a company focused on ventures and innovation services.

The new and emerging paradigm of development and trade puts a preamble on the bits and bytes framework of the virtual world and underplays the nature of atoms and the material world. The virtual world is as real and potent as the "real world" but that is not fully appreciated in much of the two thirds of the developing world. John desires to use his 30-year knowledge and experience of socio-economic development in Malaysia to spearhead new

value propositions for new creation using Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D). In short, he wants to grow the digital bridge to reap the potential digital dividends for the two-thirds of the world.

## APPENDIX II

### Profile of Malaysia's Four Prime Ministers

#### **Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (1957-1970)**

Remembered as the Father of Independence, Malaysia's first prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, recognised the vital importance of fostering cooperation among Malaysia's various ethnic groups as a way to overcome political problems. It was also Tunku Abdul Rahman who proposed the idea of Malaysia - a federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah which was established in 1963. Perhaps Tunku Abdul Rahman's greatest single achievement was to give Malaysia a sense of pride and nationhood.

#### **Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (1970-1976)**

Tun Abdul Razak masterminded and implemented Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), vigorously tackling the economic and social disparities, which fuelled racial and antagonisms. The NEP set two basic goals: to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty and to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. For his contributions to national and rural development, he is known as the Father of Development.

#### **Tun Hussein Onn (1976-1981)**

Tun Hussein Onn is renowned for stressing the issue of unity through policies aimed at rectifying economic imbalances among the races. This included launching the National Unit Trust Scheme. He also dedicated his tenure as Prime Minister to creating a culture of discipline, purpose, integrity and good government. For his efforts to promote goodwill among the country's various communities, Tun Hussein Onn is remembered as the Father of Unity.

#### **Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003)**

Tun Dr Mahathir opened the country to foreign investment, reformed taxation, reduced trade barriers, privatised numerous state-owned enterprises and created a world-class physical infrastructure. He also sought to bridge Malaysia's remaining ethnic division by increasing general prosperity. In 1991, he launched the New Development Policy, which emphasised industrial and commercial development and the elimination of poverty. Under Tun Dr Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia developed into one of the most prosperous and dynamic economies in Southeast Asia, with a burgeoning manufacturing sector, an expanding middle class and enhanced quality of life.