

## **COMMENT | Why national unity crucial to our survival, progress**

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COMMENT | This is the follow-up from our last article, published recently by some online media, entitled 'How to Achieve National Unity'.

It was written in down-to-earth language to target the lay people of all races to do their part in various places (such as "on the road", shopping malls, and employment premises) and events (such as open houses and sports) where we tend to interact or gather in order to achieve goodwill and the desired harmony.

Many people take the importance of national unity for granted. So far, there have been hardly any comprehensive articles written on this subject matter for Malaysia.

We need national unity for many life-and-death reasons.

This article intends to state these reasons loud and clear, especially to extremists and bigots and those who are creating divisions, hate, or discord based on race,

religion, or gender, usually by dishonestly scapegoating others for a social problem or playing up non-existent threats to pander to the illogical fears and insecurity of their ethnic community.

By doing so (creating disharmony), such bigoted leaders are actually undermining the interests of their own community, like “cutting one’s nose to spite the face”.

Any ethnic discord would undermine the ability of the collective whole of the nation to grow, prosper, and defend itself as stated below. Therefore, every ethnic community would suffer in such conflicts. United we stand, divided we fall.

No winners in disunity

The easiest way to understand the utter necessity of national unity is to imagine that the various races of our country represent different parts of our body. Disuniting the various parts or even destroying one part can endanger the entire body.

When a community suffers or is provoked into a conflict with another community, the entire nation would suffer and there would be no winners except for the selfish and sectarian leaders who are responsible for it.

Going back to our country's history, we must never forget that our forefathers achieved independence in 1957 without any bloodshed, mainly due to their maturity in taking a united stand in negotiating with the British government.

With the same spirit of unity, Malaya in 1963 also welcomed Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore (which left in 1965 due to political and economic differences) into the Federation of Malaysia.

National unity is crucial for national security. A truly united, rather than a divided nation, is a lot more able to defend and secure itself against any external threats. This is the conclusion of an article entitled 'National Security and National Unity: A Case for Compulsory Service' published in 2013 by a leading US Think Tank, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

As a relatively small, fragile, and vulnerable country of only 32 million people that has already depleted much of its natural resources, we would need to count more on our human resources (people) to be more united and organised in order to be more efficient and productive, which would then allow our economy to survive and grow better in a highly competitive and globalised world.

Tourism, as a major economic sector that would bring in large foreign incomes and strengthen our foreign exchange, would recover and grow more rapidly in a

conducive and culturally harmonious environment.

National unity can also help slow down and discourage our talents from leaving our country. Without such talents to promote innovation and creativity, economic growth cannot be sustained.

As for addressing poverty more efficiently, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated that we need national unity to eradicate hardcore poverty in the country, which seems to be a key focus of the current government.

The other purpose of national unity is to ensure a better quality of life for all races and to have greater happiness arising from cultural harmony. Happiness is also linked to our health and wellbeing.

For national unity to be sustainable, it must be based on social justice, equality, mutual respect, courtesy, integrity, transparency, and using an inclusive approach to give priority to all those in need of help, regardless of ethnicity.

Overhauling the education system

In order to address the many causes of disunity in our country, we would need to overhaul our education system in a just manner to institute the positive changes

needed.

Transforming our education system to be more progressive, holistic, sustainable, productive, and in tune with international education standards (yet relevant to our country) may take some time and would not be easy to do so.

It would also be painful, with lots of resistance to change, and it would require much political will and determination to see it through.

In conclusion, national unity is fundamental for our survival and progress as a nation for all races, and we must strive to strengthen it at all costs.

Any attempts to divide and undermine national unity are nothing short of treason, aimed at destroying the very foundation for our economic growth, social progress, and national security.

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