

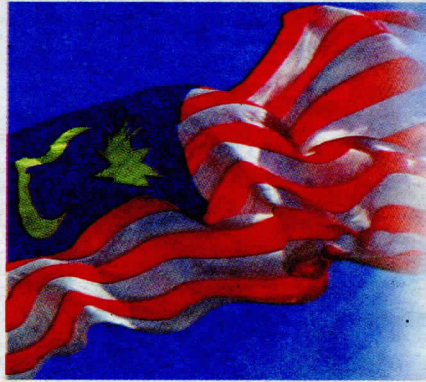
# Rukunegara: A glimmer of hope

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THE Muhyiddin government has proposed that, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Rukunegara, elements of this national philosophy should be incorporated into the events and activities marking the 2020 National Day. Most Malaysians would welcome this idea.

According to Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, a number of agencies under his ministry will be involved. Attempts will be made to inculcate every Malaysian with an appreciation of and a commitment to the Rukunegara. As a long-term plan, Rukunegara education will be implemented in schools, universities and other organisations.

Some might recall that more than three years ago, on Jan 23, 2017, a small group of activists launched a public campaign to strengthen the role of the Rukunegara in the nation's life. They felt that since the direction in which the nation was moving was unclear, especially with contradictory policy positions on what Malaysia's identity and character were, there was a need to reiterate our commitment to the national philosophy with its clearly articulated aspirations and principles enunciated by the fourth Yang Di Pertuan Agong on Aug 31, 1970.



**Kepercayaan Kepada Tuhan**  
(Belief in God)  
**Kesetiaan Kepada Raja dan Negara**  
(Loyalty to King and country)  
**Keluhuran Perlembagaan**  
(Supremacy of the Constitution)  
**Kedaulatan Undang-undang**  
(Rule of Law)  
**Kesopanan dan Kesusilaan**  
(Good behavior and morality)

- Ministry of National Unity

Besides, the significance of the five aspirations/principles have proven their worth and value through the trials and tribulations of time and it was only right that Malaysia reaffirmed its fidelity to them.

Initially, the seven of us thought that the best way to empower the Rukunegara would be to make it the preamble to the Malaysian Constitution. But the process was fraught with severe difficulties, primarily because Barisan Nasional, the ruling coalition then, did not have a two-thirds majority in Parliament, a prerequisite for amending the Constitution. Neither did Barisan show any interest in this citizens' endeavour.

We then turned to the Conference of Rulers for guidance. On

Oct 10, 2017, the Conference of Rulers, confronted with other issues with an ethno-religious connotation, issued a lucidly worded statement through the Keeper of the Royal Seal that, inter alia, emphasised that the aspirations and the principles of the Rukunegara should become "the guiding compass for all leaders, administrators and the people as a whole".

Armed with this clarion call from the Rulers, our Rukunegara campaign group decided to get in touch with the new Pakatan Harapan federal government that came to power through the ballot box on May 9, 2018. I sent the Conference of Rulers' statement and a number of other relevant documents to then Prime Minister Tun Dr

Mahathir Mohamad and all the other 221 Members of Parliament. Our plea was simple and straightforward: to adopt a parliamentary resolution endorsing the Rulers' statement to uphold the Rukunegara as the "guiding compass" for the nation and the people. There was no acknowledgement from the PM or the vast majority of MPs. There were only four positive replies, including one from a Pakatan Harapan backbencher.

When the Pakatan government collapsed at the end of February this year and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin was sworn in as the new Prime Minister on March 1, I saw another opportunity to push for the empowerment of the Rukunegara. All our campaign documents were handed over to one of the PM's aides on June 15.

The immediate response we have witnessed in the last few days seems to be a measure of Muhyiddin's commitment to the Rukunegara as a vital piece of architecture in the creation of a united, democratic, just, liberal and progressive Malaysian nation. It offers a glimmer of hope for the present and for the future.

In developing the Rukunegara for its role in nation-building, the campaign group had also elaborated on commentaries on the nation-

al philosophy that was first prepared in 1970. The revised commentaries focus on issues that have gained currency in recent decades. They can be accessed at [perpaduan.org](http://perpaduan.org), the website of Yayasan Perpaduan Malaysia, the successor to Yayasan 1Malaysia which served as the secretariat to the Rukunegara campaign group.

While a deeper understanding of the Rukunegara would be most useful, what really matters is the actual application of its principles. Society as a whole – and not just the government of the day – should assess and evaluate the implementation of the Rukunegara. To what extent have we lived up to the rule of law, one of the Rukunegara's principles, or how much have we achieved in our journey towards a progressive society orientated towards science and technology?

It is our failure to assess critically and honestly the implementation of our lofty aspirations and principles that often results in a huge gap between a nation's ideals and its realities.

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