

For Keluarga Malaysia to work, dialogue is imperative



**ENIZAHURA
ABDUL AZIZ**

A NATION is built not just upon the liberation of its land from occupation of foreign powers. It is built in the context of the identity, the togetherness and shared visions of its people.

It is a process where a society made up of groups with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures and religions come together with the aim of unity amid diversity.

The ultimate goals are to be able to peacefully coexist with each other, share a common identity as citizens and positively contribute to the country's development.

For Malaysia, it is a process that is not void of challenges. Our cultural and ethnic mosaic, differences in political affiliations and ideologies and socioeconomic backgrounds are some of the chal-

lenges we face.

Although it has been more than six decades since independence, nation building and unity prove to be the most challenging.

So, where does dialogue fit in the process of nation building? It is important to understand that dialogue, which often refers to peaceful conversations between two or more parties, aims to find common understanding.

A dialogue is a learning process and conducted with respect for the differences and commonalities in ideas and principles.

In this regard, the concept of Keluarga Malaysia, as envisioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and has become the framework for nation building during this pandemic and beyond, needs to uphold dialogue as a mechanism of engagement.

The dynamism in dialogue allows for it to become the most constructive form of interaction.

Productive dialogues can provide the government with much needed input for public policy formulation and provide the best platform for the government to share its directions and obtain public feedback.

Therefore, dialogue should not

be an exclusive exercise that only involves selected elite groups in society and policymakers. It must involve all levels of society.

As the impact of the pandemic on the people's lives and livelihoods has been unprecedented, the time of "government knows best" is very much over. Now is the time to incorporate ideas and opinions from members of society from all walks of life.

Dialogue must be made a common form of interaction among people of diverse backgrounds in multicultural and multireligious Malaysia.

Dialogues where people of different religions, cultures and ethnicities come together to discuss issues affecting humanity, such as poverty, the environment and social responsibilities, is another effort towards finding common ground and comprehensive solutions. This form of dialogue can create a sense of unity and mutual understanding that will contribute to the nation building agenda of Keluarga Malaysia.

In short, we just need talk to each other more to understand the differences and similarities that exist within society.

Keluarga Malaysia is like a tree

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People enjoying coffee during a World Coffee Day event at the Agriculture and Food Industry Ministry in Putrajaya yesterday. Dialogue must be made a common form of interaction among people of diverse backgrounds. BERNAMA PIC

that grows and sprout into different branches and leaves but stems from the same firm roots. It must find unity through commonalities, shared values, respect for differences, agreeing on the threats, concerns and challenges to its foundation and working in unison to overcome them.

The strength of Keluarga Malaysia is also very much dependent on leaders who are the prime movers of the nation building agenda.

Leaders must be able to listen and understand and be empathetic and sympathetic towards the struggles and welfare of the people.

In Islam, one important aspect of leadership is the concept of *amanah*, or trust.

Leaders are appointed or elected to their positions due to their capabilities and because they are

seen by the people as individuals who are trustworthy and able to carry out their responsibilities earnestly. In carrying them out, they are also accountable to God.

Moving forward, nation building needs more than just slogans and rhetoric. It needs everybody to contribute, from all segments of society.

As we just celebrated Malaysia Day on Sept 16, let us not forget the times when we were able to come together as a nation during the highs of success and the lows.

In conclusion, we should draw strength from each other with the belief that together we can make Keluarga Malaysia a nation that all of us are proud of.

The writer is Fellow, Centre for the Study of Shariah, Law and Politics, Islamic Institute of Understanding Malaysia (IKIM)