

# 'Back when we were 'we and us'

I BELIEVE Malaysians would generally agree with the recent comment made by our senior statesman and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad if he meant assimilation as Malaysians, and not as "Malays".

The senior statesman rightly quoted Indonesia, but was confused between race and nationality. All the races in the vast country of Indonesia are rightly called Indonesians.

So too all the two to three dozen races and tribes in our country are rightly called Malaysians. Dr Mahathir cannot possibly mean that all the races must become Malay to unite the country, surely? After all, there are Orang Asli, and native Sarawakians and Sabahans of various races and faiths, along with the rest of us who make up this nation.

Tun is right that Malaysians of whatever race, religion or background should be "Malaysian" - and I dare say that we are!

My in-laws are from Terengganu, and they love to eat budu, nasi dagang and keropok lekor. They also dress in kebaya and songket and sleep in sarongs. Language-wise, they are fluent in Malay and even the local Malay dialect.

Yet, of course, we Chinese and



**All together now:** The letter writer's family and their Malay neighbours in the 1960s. — Photo provided

the Indians still celebrate our festivals, and are of various faiths, though many fall in love with our beautiful Malay damsels and convert.

My dear Tun, Malaysia has for a long time been on the world stage as an exemplary model of a multiracial, multi-religious and multicultural nation, looked up to by so many nations, including the Islamic nations of the Middle East.

And when you were the prime minister, you went all over the globe proudly declaring that everywhere you went. You said you wanted to showcase a nation that lived in harmony, peace and

prosperity. What has happened to your mindset, thoughts and orientation?

I would like to share a photo from my childhood in the 1960s of my family and that of our my Malay neighbour when we lived in Jalan Omar, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor.

May we bring back the harmony, unity, peace and understanding of the 1950s and 1960s, when we were "we and us", and not "ours and theirs" as we are becoming now thanks to political manoeuvring to divide this beautiful nation into bits and pieces.

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