

**NEW
EDITION**

Ethnic Relations in Malaysia

Harmony & Conflict



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Syed Husin Ali

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Syed Husin Ali

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Petaling Jaya, Malaysia



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Dedicated
in Memory of

KHADIJAH @ SABARIAH ABDULLAH



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Preface

It has often been said that Malaysia is a nation in the making, with diverse ethnic groups that have not been successfully integrated. In the short history of this country, these ethnic groups have largely co-existed in harmony. But there have also been many examples of ethnic conflict and even violence.

During the last few months there have been some intriguing developments in ethnic relations in Malaysia. On the one hand, the 12th General Elections on March 8, 2008 saw a large section of voters voting across ethnic lines. This was unlike in the past. However, on the other hand, many ethnic issues were raised by a small section of people after the elections which caused inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts.

I have long been concerned with the problem of inter-ethnic relations, both as an academician and a politician. Events leading up to and following the general elections inspired me to publish this book. It is not new. It comprises a selection of eleven diverse articles, including a speech and an interview, collected over three and a half decades. Four of the articles were completed before 2000, indeed there is one article that was written in 1974 and another in 1984, while the remaining seven were written in the period from 2000 to 2008.

Not long before the book was due to be sent for publication, I felt a little uneasy because there was a glaring lacuna. Descriptions and analyses of recent events relating to ethnic relations were missing. So I quickly started to write about them. The result is the Introduction. However, because it was included rather belatedly, it could not be incorporated into the index, which by that time had already been prepared for the book. My apologies.

I have deliberately decided not to update or revise the earlier articles. This is not so much because I could not find the time to do so, but rather because I would like readers to understand them in the context of their time period and also to observe the common thread and the trend of views and ideas that link them to the recent articles.

Almost all, if not all, of the articles, together with the speech and interview in this selection, deal with the nature of ethnic relations in Malaysia and describe various related situations of harmony and conflict that took place at different times and under different circumstances. I hope that the descriptions and analyses offered here will help create awareness about the various ethnic problems that we face in our multi-ethnic society.

In all humility, I dare say that I have been consistent in my thinking. Basically, I have always emphasized the need to be aware of and to understand the problems and challenges related to the national questions. This is so that we are able to provide solutions and march forward to build a united Malaysian nation. This was certainly one of the major objectives that those of our national independence fighters who were genuine in their motives aspired to achieve.

Many people have helped in the production of this book. But wish to record my deep gratitude to two persons in particular. They are Chong Ton Sin, owner-manager of the SIRD, who continuously but gently pushed me to make sure that the book is published according to his schedule. The other is Eileen Lian, who meticulously edited the book. To both 'Terima kasih'.

S. Husin Ali

(husinsa23@yahoo.com)

1 October 2008

Preface

New Edition

This book has received quite a good reception. It has been found to be more relevant in view of the recent developments in the country, where ethnic relations has appeared to be more acute. As it was almost sold out and there was still more demand, Chong Ton Sin, the person in-charge of SIRD that first published it approached me about three months ago to work on the second edition. Since I was preoccupied with other things I could not undertake to do it immediately. Now it is finally ready.

In this new edition, I have done mainly two things. Firstly, I have updated the book wherever necessary, relevant and possible, in terms of facts and events. Secondly, I have included two more articles, namely: 'Multi-ethnic Malaysia' and 'Outline of Ethnic Relations'. There are a few other articles I was tempted to include, but I decided otherwise in order to avoid repetitions.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to SIRD for agreeing to publish this new edition, especially two persons very closely associated with it. The first is of course Chong Ton Sin and the second is Janice Cheong who efficiently did its layout and cover. Thanks also to the other staff of SIRD for their cooperation. I also need to record my gratitude to Lingswaran for his help.

S. Husin Ali

23 September, 2014

