

# Introduction the may 13th incident history essay



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The May 13 Incident is a term for the Sino-Malay race riots in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which began on May 13, 1969. These riots continued for an extensive period of time, leading the government to declare a state of national emergency and suspend Parliament until 1971. Officially, 196 people were killed between May 13 and July 31 as a result of the riots. The government cited the riots as the main cause of its more aggressive encouraging action policies, such as the New Economic Policy (NEP), after 1969.

### The events of 13 May

Members of UMNO Youth gathered in Kuala Lumpur at the residence of Selangor Menteri Besar, Dato' Harun bin Haji Idris, on 13 May and demanded that they too should hold a victory celebration at the national level. The Alliance had gained a majority in Parliament, although a reduced one, and in Selangor it had gained the majority by cooperating with the sole independent candidate. While the UMNO Youth members were gathered in the compound of the Menteri Besar's residence, two cars containing a number of Chinese suddenly drew up. The Chinese asked the gathering to disperse, saying that the residence now belonged to the opposition leader. Meanwhile, news arrived that Chinese groups had attacked Malays in Setapak. This triggered a wave of violence resulting in loss of life and property.

### **The events leading to 13 May tragedy**

The 13 May 1969 ethnic riots that broke out in Malaysia represented a milestone in the history of the young nation-state's ethnic relations since its

independence from the British colonial government in 1957. Malaysia's population is multiethnic and includes a large Malay majority, which is mostly indigenous, and two relatively large minority ethnic groups who are Chinese and Indian they are descended mainly from migrants from China and India. The Chinese form a larger ethnic minority than the Indians. Ethnicity has also been politicized in independent Malaysia because each ethnic group has its own political party.

During the British colonial administration, the migrant Chinese, who had been more economically successful than either the Malays or the Indians, were largely concentrated in the urbanized and developed parts of present day Malaysia. Most Malays and Indians lived and worked in the rural agricultural sectors. After independence, the Malay political party, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), was more powerful than other parties, in terms of its political support by the larger Malay population and its representation in the political leadership. Tensions therefore gradually developed between the politically powerful Malays and the economically successful Chinese.

In the 1969 Malaysian national elections, the national Chinese political party, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), which had won the elections in 1959 and 1964 previously, won only thirteen of the thirty-three seats it contested. The opposition Chinese parties, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Gerakan Rakyat, gained 26. 2 percent of the total vote and twenty-five parliamentary seats, compared with 13. 5 percent acquired by the MCA. The Malay national party also suffered losses because of the popularity of its major rival, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party.

With the rejection of the MCA by Chinese voters, the party decided to pull out of the government, although it remained within the Alliance Party, the coalition of the national Malay, Chinese, and Indian political parties. The withdrawal of the MCA from government led to a worsening of the tensions created by the DAP's victory parade in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. During a counter demonstration organized by UMNO on 13 May, racial violence broke out and shoots up. An estimated six thousand residents in Kuala Lumpur, which was 90 percent Chinese at the time, lost their homes and properties during the riots. Hundreds of buildings in Kuala Lumpur were demolished to the ground. Although the unofficial figures and non-governmental sources put the number of people who died in the riots in the hundreds, official figures set down the death toll at 196. Three-quarters of the casualties were reportedly Chinese.

The riots and government response showed the Chinese in Malaysia the complexity of challenging Malay dominance. They let the Malay control military and police forces, which in any confrontation could impose their will on any issue of concern to the Malays.

Since 1969, there has been a gradual increase in Malay dominance and the growth of a Malay dominated state. In 1971, the New Economic Policy was launched, which aimed at eliminating poverty and putting Malays, who make up more than half the population in Malaysia, into the mainstream of Malaysia's economic life. Preferential policies have been introduced, which have set quotas for the number of Malays to be admitted to universities as well as government and private-sector employment. At first set for twenty years, the policy was extended in 1991 for another decade.

## **Declaration of emergency**

Many people in Kuala Lumpur were caught in the racial violence. Dozens were injured and some killed, houses and cars were burnt and wrecked. The violence was largely limited to Kuala Lumpur although there were isolated outbreaks in Melaka, Perak and Penang.

The government ordered an immediate curfew throughout the state of Selangor & Kuala Lumpur. Security forces comprising some 2000 Malay Regiment soldiers and 3600 Police officers were positioned and took control of the situation. Over 300 Chinese families were moved to refugee centers at the Merdeka Stadium and Tiong Nam Settlement.

On 14 May 1969, a state of emergency was declared throughout the country, and on 16 May the National Operations Council (NOC) was established by proclamation of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King of Malaysia) headed by Tun Abdul Razak. With Parliament suspended, the NOC became the supreme decision-making body for the next 18 months. State and District Operations Councils took over state and local government.

The NOC implemented security measures to restore law and order in the country, including the establishment of an unarmed Vigilante Corps, a territorial army, and police force battalions. The restoration of order in the country was gradually achieved. Curfews continued in most parts of the country, but were gradually scaled back. Peace was restored in the affected areas within two months. In February 1971 parliamentary rule was re-established.

### Precursors

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## Formation of Malaysia

On its formation in 1963, Malaysia, a federation incorporating Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia), Singapore, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak, suffered from a sharp division of wealth between the Chinese, who were perceived to control a large portion of the Malaysian economy, and the Malays, who were perceived to be more poor and rural. This was the common perception even though the British left all of their conglomerates (mostly plantation sectors) into the hands of the ruling Malays. These already successful companies started by the former colonial masters were the economy of this new born nation which are still going strong till this day.

The 1964 Race Riots in Singapore contributed to the expulsion of that state from Malaysia on 9 August 1965, and racial tension continued to simmer, with many Malays dissatisfied by their newly independent government's perceived willingness to placate the Chinese at their expense.

## Ketuanan Melayu

Politics in Malaysia at this time were mainly Malay based, with an emphasis on special privileges for the Malays and other indigenous Malaysians. They are grouped together collectively with the Malays under the title of "bumiputra" would not be granted a similar standing until after the riots. There had been a recent outburst of Malay passion for Ketuanan Melayu (a Malay term for Malay supremacy or Malay dominance) after the National Language Act of 1967, which in the opinion of some Malays, had not gone far enough in the act of enshrining Malay as the national language. Heated arguments about the nature of Malay privileges, with the mostly Chinese

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opposition mounting a “ Malaysian Malaysia” campaign had contributed to the separation of Singapore on 9 August 1965, and inflamed passions on both sides.

### Rioting

The riot ignited the capital Kuala Lumpur and the surrounding area; according to Time, spreading throughout the city in 45 minutes. Many people in Kuala Lumpur were caught in the racial violence where dozens were injured and some killed, houses and cars were burnt and wrecked, but except for minor disturbances in Malacca, Perak, Penang and Singapore, where the populations of Chinese people were similarly larger, the rest of the country remained calm. Although violence did not occur in the rural areas, Time found that ethnic conflict had manifested itself in subtler forms, with Chinese businessmen refusing to make loans available for Malay farmers, or to transport agricultural produce from Malay farmers and fishermen.

Incidents of violence continued to occur in the weeks after 13, with the targets now not only being Malay or Chinese, but also Indian. It is argued that this showed that “ the struggle has become more clearly than ever the Malay extremists’ fight for total hegemony.”

### Repercussions

#### Immediate effects

Immediately after the riot, the government assumed emergency powers and suspended Parliament, which would only reconvene again in 1971. It also suspended the press and established a National Operations Council. The

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NOC's report on the riots stated, " The Malays who already felt excluded in the country's economic life, now began to feel a threat to their place in the public services," and implied this was a cause of the violence.

The riot led to the expulsion of Malay nationalist Mahathir Mohamad from UMNO and propelled him to write his seminal work *The Malay Dilemma*, in which he posited a solution to Malaysia's racial tensions based on aiding the Malays economically through an positive action programme.

Tunku Abdul Rahman resigned as Prime Minister in the ensuing UMNO power struggle, the new perceived ' Malay-ultra' dominated government swiftly moved to placate Malays with the Malaysian New Economic Policy (NEP), enshrining affirmative action policies for the bumiputra (Malays and other indigenous Malaysians). The Rukunegara was another reaction to the riot. The pledge was introduced on August 31, 1970 as a way to foster unity among Malaysians.

#### Political references

Malaysian politicians have often cited the May 13 incident when warning of the potential consequences of racial rhetoric, or as a bogeyman to blanket off discussion on any issues that challenge the status quo. In the 1990 general election and 1999 general election, May 13 was cited in Barisan Nasional campaign advertisements and in speeches by government politicians. Such usage of the incident in political discourse has been criticized; the Tunku stated: " For the PM (Dr Mahathir Mohamad) to repeat the story of the May 13 as a warning of what would have happened if the government had not taken appropriate action is like telling ghost stories to

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our children to prevent them from being naughty... The tale should not be repeated because it shows us to be politically immature...”

In 2004, during the UMNO general assembly Badruddin Amiruldin , the current deputy permanent chairman, waved a book on May 13 during his speech and stated “ No other race has the right to question our privileges, our religion and our leader”. He also stated that doing so would be similar to “ stirring up a hornet’s nest”. The next day, Dr Pirdaus Ismail of the UMNO Youth was quoted as saying “ Badruddin did not pose the question to all Chinese in the country ... Those who are with us, who hold the same understanding as we do, were not our target. In defending Malay rights, we direct our voice at those who question them.” Deputy Internal Security Minister Noh Omar dismissed the remarks as a lesson in history and said that Badruddin was merely reminding the younger generation of the blot on the nation’s history.

### The Crisis of 1969

The collaboration of the MCA and the MIC in these policies weakened their hold on the Chinese and Indian electorates. At the same time, the effects of the government’s affirmative action policies of the 1950s and ’60s had been to create a discontented class of educated but underemployed Malays. This was a dangerous combination, and led to the formation of a new party, the Malaysian People’s Movement (Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia) in 1968.

Gerakan was a deliberately non-communal party, bringing in Malay trade unionists and intellectuals as well as Chinese and Indian leaders. At the same time, an Islamist party, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) and a Chinese

socialist party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), gained increasing support, at the expense of UMNO and the MCA respectively.

At the May 1969 federal elections, the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance polled only 48 percent of the vote, although it retained a majority in the legislature. The MCA lost most of the Chinese-majority seats to Gerakan or DAP candidates. The victorious opposition celebrated by holding a motorcade on the main streets of Kuala Lumpur with supporters holding up brooms as a signal of its intention to make sweeping changes. Fear of what the changes might mean for them (as much of the country's businesses were Chinese owned), a Malay backlash resulted, leading rapidly to riots and inter-communal violence in which about 6, 000 Chinese homes and businesses were burned and at least 184 people were killed.

The government declared a state of emergency, and a National Operations Council, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, took power from the government of Tunku Abdul Rahman, who in September 1970 was forced to retire in favour of Abdul Razak.

Using the Emergency-era Internal Security Act (ISA), the new government suspended Parliament and political parties, imposed press censorship and placed severe restrictions on political activity. The ISA gave the government power to intern any person indefinitely without trial. These powers were widely used to silence the government's critics, and have never been repealed. The Constitution was changed to make illegal any criticism, even in Parliament, of the Malaysian monarchy, the special position of Malays in the country, or the status of Malay as the national language.

In 1971, Parliament reconvened, and a new government coalition, the National Front (Barisan Nasional), took office. This included UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, the much weakened Gerakan, and regional parties in Sabah and Sarawak. The DAP was left outside as the only significant opposition party. The PAS also joined the Front but was expelled in 1977. Abdul Razak held office until his death in 1976. He was succeeded by Datuk Hussein Onn, the son of UMNO's founder Onn Jaafar, and then by Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, who had been Education Minister since 1981, and who held power for 22 years. During these years policies were put in place which led to the rapid transformation of Malaysia's economy and society.

## Principles of Rukun Negara

### The history of the Pillars of National Development

Pillars of National declared by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on 31 August 1970 that the country celebrates Independence Day on the 13th time. Pillars of the doctrine were introduced by the National Operations Council (MAGERAN) which assume the responsibility to rule the country when the system of parliamentary government was suspended on May 16, 1969 due to the racial riots, better known as May 13, 1969 incident. MAGERAN was headed by a Director, where he established to restore the unity of the increasingly shaky at the time of inter-ethnic strife that has occurred at 1946, 1956 (in Penang), 1960 (in Pangkor), 1966 (in Bukit Mertajam), 1967 (in Pulau Pinang) and May 13, 1969 (Kuala Lumpur).

### Fundamental of the Principles of Formulation Factors

Implementation of the rule policy of British society overshadows unity in Malaya. A classification of the reference work and a different education system was done to avoid interactions between the people of Malaya, which consists of three main branches which is Malays, Chinese and Indians. Through this policy, the Malays who are mostly living in rural areas (villages) are worked as fishermen and farmers, Chinese people residing in urban areas and mining areas work as traders and miners of tin, while the Indians mostly living in the estates and worked as a laborer, has indirectly created feelings of distrustful of each other, which is the main factor that leads to the May 13, 1969 incident.

Bloody events that occurred on May 13, 1969 has revealed the true disaster of the feelings from the three largest ethnic groups in Malaysia. Since the country achieved independence on August 31, 1957, it was found that the Malay race is far behind in terms of control of the economy and education in Malaya as a Malay is the majority who live in rural areas. While the Chinese were more advanced with a master of business and other economic areas since they live in urban areas and worked in the mining area. Thus, the awareness among the Malays felt that they had left behind and marginalized in their own land due to poverty. For the Chinese and Indian communities, they were concerned about the conditions of citizenship even though some of them are ready to be loyal to Malaya.

Since the Japanese occupation in World War II, the Japanese adopted a policy of anti-Chinese and pro-Malay which has raised the anger and prejudice among Chinese against the Malays. When Japan surrendered and before the

arrival of British, Chinese, a majority of members of the Three Stars (MCP) got the opportunity to take revenge.

The departure of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965 which is a result of the concept of “ Malaysia for Malaysians” are not directly dispute the position and privileges of the Malays which Lee Kuan Yew said, fueling anti-Chinese and anti-Malay. These incidents which eventually resulted in a bloody incident on May 13, 1969. It has claimed many lives and property is a manifestation of the relationship between the people of Malaya, which is waiting to explode. The May 13, 1969 incident happened as soon as the 1969 general election results are known.

Chaos and bloodshed that occurred on May 13, 1969 which forced the government to declare a state of emergency order. HRH Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong on the advice of then Prime Minister and immediately declared a state of emergency throughout the country effective May 16, 1969. This declaration has resulted in a parliamentary system of government to be suspended. On the certificate of the Prime Minister, Yang di-Pertuan Agong has appointed Tun Razak bin Dato Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister at that time, as director of the National Operations Council (MAGERAN) responsible for carrying out the powers of the Federal government on the powers delegated by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

National Consultative Council was established to ensure effective MAGERAN, the National Consultative Council which is responsible for discussing and examine issues of national unity and find a way solve the problem of multi-racial society. The Council found that one of the most significant problem identified is the structure of a plural society in Malaysia. It was found that

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Malaysian society is still divided on the basis of race, religion and occupation. Unity to be achieved not only involves the consolidation race, but was found to be economic and social integration also needs to be done. In relation to the National Consultative Council have agreed to form a national ideology that became known as the Pillars of the five key principles.

### Pillars of National Objectives and Goals

Fundamental formulation of National Objectives has its own objectives such as:

(A) To create a society to be prosperous that can be enjoyed with a fair and equitable

All members of the community have equal opportunity to enjoy the wealth of the country. Just society will exist in this country if the nation's wealth is divided fairly and equitably. To achieve this purpose the parties are weak will be assisted so that they have equal opportunity to compete with others more advanced. Society which we aspire is free from the oppression of one against the other or suppression of a group against the other.

(B) To preserve the democratic way of life

Constitution guarantees the freedom of human rights and freedom of political activities as long as the people of this country do not violate state law. But the rights and freedoms cannot be misused in the name of democracy for burning the sense of racism or to destroy democracy.

In the event of any problems that have plagued the country, the importance of the nation must be advanced. National interest should be priority over the interests of a people or a party, if no, stability and national security will be threatened.

(C) To achieve a greater unity among all community

All people should support the ambition to create a nation and the country where members of the community think themselves as Malaysians, irrespective of ethnicity and their beliefs. Malaysians have various races with various problems. The situation becomes complicated because of the economic imbalance exists between the races. Although there are different elements, through the Pillars of the country to form a united nation where all people regardless of race has a sense of loyalty and love of country.

(D) To develop a liberal attitude towards cultural traditions rich and various patterns

Society are free to practice religion, customs and culture of their fit with the goal of national unity. Indeed our country is rich in culture and customs practiced by people of various races. While there are differences, all members of society should aspire to create a society where different cultural conditions that can benefit and be a source of strength to the United Nations.

(E) To build a progressive society with a science and modern technology

We aspire to create a progressive society which progress in science and technology in line with the latest technology and a borderless world and the

era of globalization. The world is witnessing the changes so quickly in the field of science, science and technology.

Progressive society to be created is a society that is moving forward in line with the progress of science and technology that eventually will make Malaysia a developed country as the goals of Vision 2020. But progress will not make the people of this country are excluded from the boundaries of religion and divine values.

#### Fundamental Principles of Explanation

The pledge of the Rukunegara is as follows:

“ Our Nation, Malaysia is dedicated to: Achieving a greater unity for all her people; maintaining a democratic way of life; creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably distributed; ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural tradition, and building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology.

We, the people of Malaysia, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends, guided by these principles:

- Belief in God
- Loyalty to King and Country
- Upholding the Constitution
- Sovereignty of the Law, and



## - Good Behaviour and Morality”

### Five principles of Rukun Negara

#### 1. Belief in God (Kepercayaan kepada Tuhan)

This Nation has been founded upon a firm belief in God. It was in the name of God that this Nation was established as a sovereign State. Islam is the official religion of the Federation. Other religions and beliefs may be practiced in peace and harmony and there shall be no discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion.

Pillars of the National Committee makers recognize the importance of religion and belief in God in human life. The absence of religion can destroy the personality of a person and a nation. Recognizing the importance of holding strength of the community against the teachings of their religion, this principle has been chosen as the first principle in the Fundamental State.

#### 2. Loyalty to King and God (Kesetiaan kepada Raja dan Negara)

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy and the Yang diâ€™ Pertuan Agong is the sovereign Head of State. Parallel with this institution of the Yang diâ€™ Pertuan Agong as a constitutional monarch is the continued existence of the institution of the State Rulers who are heads of their respective States. The Yang diâ€™ Pertuan Agong, the Rulers and the Governors are symbols of unity and therefore stand above politics.

The loyalty that is expected that every citizen must be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty the Yang diâ€™ Pertuan Agong and be a true, loyal

and faithful citizen of the Federation. In addition, and without derogating from such loyalty, citizens who are subjects of the Rulers must bear the true allegiance and loyalty to their respective Rulers. Loyalty constitutes the soul of our nationalism. It is this inherent loyalty to King and Country which binds together our various races into one single, united Nation.

### 3. Upholding the Constitution (Keluhuran Perlembagaan)

This principle is pressing need for people to accept, abide by and defend the Constitution or the glory. National Constitution is the highest legal source. Its function is to provide protection to all citizens of this country of their rights and privileges as citizens. Every Malaysian citizen is required to respect, appreciate, and understand the purpose and content and historical background of the formation of the Constitution.

It is the duty of a citizen to respect and appreciate the letter, the spirit and the historical background of the Constitution. This historical background led to such provisions as those regarding the position of His Majesty the Yang diâ€™ Pertuan Agong and Their Royal Highnesses the Rulers, the position of Islam as the official religion, the position of Malay as the national and official language, the special position of the Malays and other Natives, the legitimate interests of the other communities, and the conferment of citizenship. It is the sacred duty of a citizen to defend and uphold the Constitution.

### 4. Rule of Law (Kedaulatan Undang-undang)

Justice is founded upon the rule of law. Every citizen is equal before the law. Fundamental liberties are guaranteed to all citizens. These include liberty of the person, equal protection of the law, freedom of religion, rights of property and protection against banishment.

The Constitution confers on a citizen the right of free speech, assembly and association and this right may be enjoyed freely subject only to limitations imposed by law. The rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution do not include the right to overthrow the Government either by force or by other unconstitutional means. The Rule of Law is ensured by the existence of an independent judiciary with powers to pronounce on the constitutionality and legality or otherwise of executive acts.

#### 5. Good Behaviour and Morality (Kesopanan dan Kesusilaan)

These five principles to emphasize the development of personality and behavior of a people. The aim is to develop citizens who are well mannered and good morals in line with the Courtesy Campaign and Values conducted now. The nature of individual honor and good morals are the most meaningful and important in the context of relationships with each other in multi-ethnic society in the country.

Courtesy and good morals should be adopted in the form of an individual and the society of high discipline and high morals that will help create a harmonious society. Polite behavior also has a high degree of morality in both private life and the life of nation. These principles to guide behavior is preserved and developed in accordance with the privacy of the people and values.

Individuals and groups shall conduct their affairs in such a manner as not to violate any of the accepted canons of behaviour, which include the abhorrence and rejection of any conduct or behaviour which is arrogant or offensive to the sensitivities of any group. No citizen should question the loyalty of another citizen on the ground that he belongs to a particular community. Good behaviour also includes a high standard of morality in both our personal and public life.

Fundamental interest of individuals and communities to produce the desired goals and objectives in the context of ideological ethnic relations in Malaysia

Malaysia is a country with people of various racial, religious, cultural and lifestyle are different. Therefore, national unity is an important goal in each of the policies implemented by the government either in the field of economic, social and political.

National unity is a matter of concern in the organization and administration of all development strategies in order to maintain and defend freedom as an independent and sovereign. Through unity, the country's economic performance can be improved so that the standard of living will be improved as well as create a stable political system. Excellence in education, a prosperous harmonious Malaysian society, unity, dignity and vision will be produced and subsequently making the Malaysian society as an excellent society.

National Fundamental must embraced by all levels of society which is the citizens of Malaysia. Pillars of National are a value that must be achieved. Pillars of the realization of a vision for a social contract agreed by the major

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racism in Malaya or Malaysia during the drafting of the Constitution or the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya Federation of Malaysia.

A peaceful country should be preserved. Preservation of peace is a duty and responsibility of all citizens. We should live in peace and harmony. We do not do activities that can trigger misunderstandings between people. We need to obey the law all the time.

Peace, prosperity and peace that we enjoy now is a result of the commitment, cooperation and solidarity shown by the various parties, including individuals, government agencies and non-governmental agencies (NGOs). Peace, prosperity and peace we enjoy is not able to survive if people are not united and not to cooperate with the government.

## Conclusion

National Fundamental was created as a result of the racial riots that occurred on May 13, 1969. The tragedy has caused all Malaysians to know the importance of united and live in peace and harmony in order to avoid a suspicious nature, distrust of each other. Unity is the key goal to be achieved by all countries in the world, including Malaysia. It is important because without unity, the country will become weak, difficult to be developed and easily affected by either external power.

Therefore, the existence of the rule in this country is a starting point towards achieving unity among all ethnic groups in Malaysia. When the Malaysians appreciate the full meaning of the National Fundamental, then it will facilitate the administration of the country as people began to realize the

concept of respect one another regardless of skin color, background and culture of a society. In this regard the National Fundamental goals can be achieved easily without prejudice.

Unity is the key objective to be achieved by all countries in the world, including Malaysia. It is important because without unity, the country will become weak, difficult to be developed and easily affected by either external power or the country itself.

Pillars of practice will lead to a united people, reg