

# Building Bridges To Reconnect The Dots - When we build sturdy bridges, we will build a strong nation.

By Matthias Chang – Future Fast-Forward

**We did build bridges in the past to connect the dots. But, we connected the wrong dots!**

**We provided and supplied the labour with enthusiasm but all the building materials for the bridges were stamped “Made in Britain”.**

Are we a Nation or are we just a Clone of our Colonial Past?

**So, what bridges are we going to build in Malaysia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

## **A Telescopic History**

In 1957, the **Federation of Malaya** was established and “independence” was “granted” by the British Colonial Power.

In 1963, the **British Colonial Power** for geopolitical objectives, orchestrated **Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah (called North Borneo)** to join the Federation of Malaya and **renamed** the enlarged entity, “**Malaysia**”. Singapore subsequently withdrew from the Federation on August 9, 1965, and became an “independent Republic.”

We have a **Ministry of National Unity**, first established in **1972**, under the premiership of Tun Razak, long after 1957 and 1963 and the said Ministry still exist today under the premiership of Anwar Ibrahim.

We also had a “department” (1) in the Prime Minister’s Office, the Department of:

- National Unity and Integration in 2004-2008 (Maximus Ongkili),
- Unity and Performance in 2009-2013 (Koh Tsu Koon),
- National Unity and Integration in 2013-2018 (Joseph Kurup), and
- National Unity and Social Wellbeing in 2018-2020 (Waytha M. Ponnusamy).

Yet, unity has been illusive since 1957!

Why?

So, do we have a “Nation” fractured and divided as we are?

**Do we need** a Ministry of National Unity to foster Unity?

Give me a break!

## **Etymology of Putrajaya**

Putrajaya was the initiative of Tun Mahathir Mohamad (when he was the then 4<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister) and was named after the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj. The name is derived from the Sanskrit language, which was then adopted into Malay:

**"putra"** (पुत्र) means son and **"jaya"** (जया) means "success" or "victory".

Hence, Putrajaya means victorious men or people. (2)

It is my fervent belief that Putrajaya was an unspoken driver for national unity, and that Malaysians would be proud of such an achievement. The then Opposition parties raised a chorus of objections, that the project was a "white elephant" and a waste for resources. Tun Mahathir repelled the voracious onslaught, when he said,

***"We build things we can use and it is meant for the government of the future, maybe 100 years, 300 years, 1,000 years, I wouldn't know, I won't be around by then..."***

It must have been painful and frustrating that the critics would dismiss such a gigantic endeavour with infantile political narratives but, Putrajaya stands proud as a testament to the pursuit of excellence. **Five Stars \*\*\*\*\*** for "Walking the Talk", the humongous effort, and as so often the case, "Talking the Talk" is cheap and easy! Unfortunately, we need more than bricks and mortars to glue a nation together.

## **Bullet Points To Ponder**

- We need discipline and dedication
- We must dismantle the servile attitude of dependency - that the government must always back- stop the privileged and the elites
- To promote the spirit of self-sacrifice
- The insidious mind-set "Money Talks"
- Mismanagement of strategic resources
- The destructive "Identity Myopia"
- Our greatest wealth – the human capital
- What bonds us at the 'Lowest Common Denominator'?
- What are the core interests of our nation?
- What are we over-focusing on?
- Are we educated or are we the deplorables?
- The fixation on myths and falsehoods across the entire divide
- The Peace and Harmony dividends, what are they? (3)

**When we exercise our brains on the positive and only the positive, it is so easy to move on and down play and or ignore the negatives.**

**Malaysia is a great country if and when we can keep it!**

## **End Notes**

- 1** When there was no Ministry of National Unity, Malaysia had instead, a Department within the Prime Minister Office.
- 2** Wikipedia
- 3** The Bullet Points are enumerated not in any sequence of priority, but merely to provoke serious contemplation.