Dynamics of nation-building in Malaysia

Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

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Hadiah: J. E. Jayasuriya

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NEGERI SEMBILAN
MELAKA
JOHOR
SUMATRA
(Indonesia)

DYNAMICS OF NATION - BUILDING IN MALAYSIA

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Dedicated to

Mr. Raja Roy Singh

(Unesco Assistant Director-General in Asia and the Pacific)

as a tribute to his leadership in promoting the progress of education in the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific.

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Introduction

PART I

BRITISH MALAYA

Chapter		*Page*
1.	The Emergence of British Malaya and a Plural Society	1
2.	The School System : Plural, Unequal, Divisive ...	11
3.	Political Developments upto Independence ...	49
4.	Education for Nation-Building : An Abortive British Attempt and its Sequel	58

PART II

POST-INDEPENDENCE MALAYA 1957 — 1969

5.	Socio-economic Imbalances among Racial Groups (circa 1969)	75
6.	Political Developments 1957 — 1969 ...	89
7.	The Issue of Language in Education ...	93

PART III

MALAYSIA 1970 — 1980

Chapter		*Page*
8.	Political Strategies for Nation-Building ...	105
9.	Economic Strategies for Nation-Building ...	115
10.	Educational Strategies for Nation-Building ...	135
11.	Retrospect and Prospect	162
Select Bibliography	... ...	187
Index	... ...	191

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a federation of eleven States (Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Penang, Perak, Perlis, Selangor, and Trengannu, collectively referred to as West Malaysia some time ago but now called Peninsular Malaysia), Sarawak, and Sabah (formerly called North Borneo). The eleven States together with Singapore constituted British Malaya. When the federation was first formed in 1963, Singapore was a member, but it withdrew in 1965 (see chapter 6 paragraph 4).

The present book deals with Peninsular Malaysia only, and not with Sarawak and Sabah. Peninsular Malaysia is, of course, the major constituent of the federation, and had in 1975 a population of 14.4 millions as against 1.9 millions in Sarawak and Sabah together. The population at the census of 1970 was 53.2 per cent Malays, 35.4 per cent Chinese, 10.6 per cent Indians (using the term collectively to include Indians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans), and 0.8 per cent others. The history of the emergence of Malaysia as a plural society, divided by race, language, and religion, is related in chapter 1. The following is a fair assessment of the Chinese.

> "The Chinese, mostly from southern China, who left their homeland to work in Southeast Asia, including the various areas which now make up Malaysia, were not a random selection. Those who made the journey and survived were exceptionally hardy and determined, rather like the early pioneers to the North American continent. Their attitudes were, and had to be, fiercely competitive. This was in striking contrast to the Malays, who were eminently non-competitive, because there was no point in being anything else."
>
> (Milne, R. S. and Mauzy, Diane K. *Politics and government in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur, 1978, pp. 6, 7.)

Taken along with the fact that the majority of the urban population was and is Chinese and Indian, British economic and educational policies for their part contributed in substantial measure to the

creation and perpetuation of Malay disadvantage of such dimensions that restitutional measures extending over several decades are necessary for the achievement of a fair racial balance in enjoying the fruits of economic progress. The dominance of Chinese in the economy makes racial balance the over-riding issue in society and politics. If Indonesia and the Philippines, each with less than 5 per cent Chinese, have shown concern about the economic dominance of the Chinese, which is on a relatively small scale compared with the situation in Malaysia, it should cause no surprise that serious concern should be felt by the Malays about the Chinese who constitute 35.4 per cent.

Plural societies in which a sense of national unity has to be forged in order to keep in check primordial loyalties that threaten national unity and encourage centrifugal tendencies are found in very many parts of the world. Even some "old" nations are not immune from divisive forces, witness the occasional manifestations of fissiparous tendencies in Canada or Wales, and the persistent holocaust in Northern Ireland. But among countries which have to build a sense of nationhood from scratch, Malaysia is unique in the overwhelming importance that the government, which is a coalition of racial parties, attaches to this task. Nowhere else in the world are political, economic, and educational strategies so sharply focused on nation-building as they are in Malaysia. A case study of Malaysia offers interesting insights into the processes of psycho-social engineering as they relate to the task of nation-building.

It is hoped that the present book would be of interest to the many plural societies all over the world that are striving to develop in their peoples a strong sense of shared nationhood. Some of the Malaysian strategies may be suggestive for what may be attempted in them. The book would be of interest to Malaysians also. Discussions with several of them have shown the salience of unjustified stereotypes, which the historical perspective and the analysis of events presented in the book may help to modify and thereby contribute to a better understanding among them. My task has essentially been to show how things have come to be as they are, as such an understanding is fundamental to an appreciation of the rationale behind the present policies and a dedicated commitment to them for realizing the vision of a unified Malaysian nation.

J. E. Jayasuriya.

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BRITISH MA

CHAPTER 1

THE EMERGENCE OF BRITISH MALAYA AND A PLURAL SOCIETY

1. The British became overlords of Malaya as the rssult of the combination of a number of factors such as trading interests, political sagacity, dissension in Malay Sultanates, wars and treaties among European powers, and a relatively mild use of military force. Geographical, political, and economic factors operating in interaction with one another were responsible for making Malaya a plural society.

2. The initial impetus for British interest in Malaya came from the realisation by the British of the value of establishing a port of call in the Straits of Malacca for the benefit of British ships engaged in trade with China. The first British possession in Malaya was Penang, which was part of the Sultanate of Kedah. It is of interest to note how the British obtained possession of Penang. Kedah was subject to military threats by the Siamese from the north, and the Bugis from the south. The Bugis were a sea-faring group of people from the Celebes. The Celebes to Java trade was in their hands, and when the Dutch dispossessed them of it, they turned to piracy and foreign invasion occupying parts of Malaya, gradually gaining political power by supporting one local faction against another. Soon, they had control over Johore and Selangor, the Malay Sultans being more or less puppets in their hands. In course

of time, they posed a threat to Kedah. When a British merchant-sailor, Francis Light, opened negotiations in 1771 with the Sultan of Kedah to establish a trading post on behalf of the East India Company, the Sultan was willing to concede this right in return for military assistance against the Siamese and the Bugis. It was not possible to arrive at an agreement at that time. However, in 1786 Light was offered the unpopulated island of Penang in return for a stipend for the Sultan, and military protection against the Sultan's enemies. The offer was accepted, and Light administered and developed Penang subject to the authority of the Governor-General of Bengal, who was responsible for exercising supervision over the activities of the British East India Company. In a couple of years, Penang grew into a flourishing trading centre, attracting Chinese in large numbers and Indians to a lesser extent. The Bugis, having succeeded in driving the Dutch from Johore and Selangor, persuaded the Sultan of Kedah to make an attempt to dispossess the British of their occupation of Penang, but the joint Malay-Bugis attack on Penang was easily repulsed by the British. No further attempt was made to capture Penang and, in fact, in 1800 the British succeeded in acquiring from the Sultan for payment Province Wellesley on the mainland to serve as a source of food supply.

3. The Dutch who had established a fort and a trading post in Malacca voluntarily offered it to the British in 1795 as a temporary measure to prevent it from falling into French hands, anticipating defeat in a war against France. The British readily accepted the trusteeship, but anxious to build up Penang as the principal port and trading centre in Malaya destroyed the port in Malacca so that when the time came to hand it back to the Dutch its importance would have been diminished. However, the need to hand it back did not arise. By the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, the British were given possession of Malacca in return for the transfer to the Dutch by the British of Bencoolen in Java. It was also part of the Anglo-Dutch accord that the west coast of Malaya would become a British zone of influence and power, while the Indonesian archipelago would become a Dutch zone of influence and power.

4. While the possession of Penang and Malacca was clearly an asset, a British officer Thomas Stamford Raffles alerted the British East India Company to the advantage of establishing a port near the southern tip of the Straits of Malacca. Instructed by Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, to take action for "the settlement of a station beyond Malacca such as may command the Southern entrance of those Straits," Raffles set his eyes on Singapore, a sparsely populated island ruled by a *temenggong* (a Malay chieftain) owing allegiance to the Sultan of Johore, who was very much under the control of the Bugis.[2] When the Sultan died in 1812, there was a dispute about the succession, and the Bugis installed the younger son, Abdul Rahman, to the exclusion of the elder son, Hussain, who happened to be out of the State at the time of the death. Raffles, finding that the *temenggong* of Singapore favoured the elder son, contrived to persuade the latter to stake his claims, thereby dividing the Sultanate into two. Thereafter, Hussein and the *temenggong* were persuaded to let the British establish in 1819 a trading post in Singapore on payment of an annual stipend. The location of Singapore conferred on it distinct advantages which made the British lose no time in developing it, and soon it became the great entrepot of South-east Asia, providing tax-free facilities for import, storage, and export of merchandise from both the east and the west. Thereafter, the importance of Penang and Malacca lay only in the extent to which they served the needs of peninsular trade. In 1826, the three British possessions — Penang, Malacca, and Singapore — were combined to constitute a single administrative unit called the Straits Settlements and brought under the jurisdiction of the East India Company's administrative structure in India. Penang was the administrative capital in 1826, but was replaced by Singapore in 1820. Later, in 1858, the Straits Settlements came under the India Office in London, which replaced the British East India Company, and still later, in 1867, control was transferred to the Colonial Office. Thenceforth, administration at the local level was vested in a British Governor stationed in Singapore, and answerable to the Colonial office in Whitehall.

5. Even before the British occupation of Penang, Malacca, and Singapore the Chinese were present in fair numbers in Malaya having come for trade purposes. "The economic significance of the peninsula lay...in its minerals, its gems, and its spices, and in these lay its early attraction for the Chinese."[2] The Indians also did trade with the peninsula, and a small number had settled down.

6. The population estimate for Penang in the early 1830s was 16,000 Malays, 11,000 Indians, and 9,000 Chinese.[3] In Malacca town, the population in 1826 consisted of 4,000 to 5,000 Chinese, being the largest single community, slightly more than 3,000 Malays, and about 2,000 Indians.

> ".....after the different settlements.....passed one after the other into the hands of the British, so that facilities for trade and protection to enjoy the fruits of their industry were available, the Chinese began to pour into Malaya and settle down in ever increasing numbers. When the British flag was first hoisted in Singapore there were hardly fifty Chinese in the island, but in three months' time their number did not fall short of three thousand."[4]

In 1845, the population of Singapore was 52,000. There were 33,000 Chinese, 11,000 Malays, 6,000 Indians, and 2,000 people of other nationalities. By the 1850s, the Chinese were the largest racial group in Penang, numbering 24,000 out of a population of 58,000 as against 20,000 Malays, 12,000 Indians, and 2,000 people of other nationalities. In other words, between the 1820s and the 1850s, the Chinese population in Penang from being behind the Malays and the Indians got ahead of both these ethnic groups.

7. In nearly all urban areas, the Chinese occupied a prominent place in commerce and trade, both large scale and small scale. They also functioned as middlemen between producers, as well as between various levels of traders, and more importantly in trade transactions between Europeans and the Malay Sultanates.

8. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the discovery of large deposits of tin in Perak and Selangor, the readiness of Chinese entrepreneurs to undertake tin mining, and the willingness of Malay Sultans to grant mining concessions to Chinese entrepreneurs for payment of rent led to a large influx of Chinese immigrants into these States. Some of the labourers, with characteristic enterprise, extended their activities to trading operations. As the reason for Chinese emigration from their homeland to Malaya was the desire to better their economic status, they did not interest themselves in subsistence agriculture, which was the basis of their livelihood in China. Instead, they were involved in all types of occupations which brought good monetary rewards, such as tin-mining, trade and commerce initially, and later either cash-crop agriculture or industries. The Indians were less resourceful than the Chinese but ahead of the Malays, whose initiative was at a very low level, not feeling the compulsions that prevailed with the immigrant races.

9. Tin-mining had political consequences to which we shall now turn our attention. In Perak, internal strife on the one hand among Malay chieftains who quarrelled over the division of rents for tin payable by the Chinese entrepreneurs to whom mining areas had been leased out, and on the other hand among the Chinese tin miners who often belonged to different clans, persuaded the Sultan of Perak in 1976 to seek the help of the British to maintain peace and order in his territory. Nothing suited the British better and, in return for British military help, the Sultan

> "agreed to receive and provide a suitable residence for a British officer, to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his Court and whose advice must also be asked and acted upon in all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom."

Internal strife, either of the sorts mentioned above or in connection with dynastic succession, led in course of time to similar treaties being made with the rulers of Selangor, Negeri

Sembilan, and Pahang. Until 1896, the four States were known as the Protected Malay States. In 1896, the four States were constituted into a federation and called the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.). The British thus created a political unit where none existed. The Straits Settlements was the first such unit and the F.M.S. the second. The northern States of Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu, and Kelantan acknowledged sovereignty to Siam, and Siamese advisers were stationed in them. In 1902, the British concluded an agreement with Siam in accordance with which British advisers were assigned in place of Siamese advisers without prejudice to the rights of the Siamese. In 1909, the British prevailed upon the Siamese to relinquish their rights. In the southern half of the country, between Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, and Singapore there was the state of Johore, as yet unattached to Britain. But Johore, too, asked for a British adviser in 1914. These States came to be known as the Unfederated Malay States. The authority of British "advisers" appointed to them was somewhat less than that of the Residents of the F.M.S. As things turned out, advice was no more than a euphemism for control, and the British became the real masters of the whole of Malaya, the country being served more or less on a platter to them.

10. At first, the British interested themselves only in exporting the tin mined by the Chinese and confined their attention to the construction of roads and railways linking the mining areas with the ports, importing a certain amount of Indian labour for work on the roads and railways. After about 1800, British and other European companies entered the field of tin mining, using a more advanced technology than the Chinese with the result that between 1900 and 1930 the European companies increased their proportion of the output of tin from 10 per cent to 60 per cent. As it was impossible to find Malay labour to work the tin mines, they used Chinese immigrant labour, thereby contributing to the increase of the Chinese population in Malaya.

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11. As noted in paragraph 2, the earliest Indians to arrive in Malaya did so for trade purposes and took up residence in urban centres. But large scale immigration took place only when the British imported a large number of labourers from South India to work on the rubber plantations.

> "In 1891, before the rubber boom began, Indians in Malaya, including the Straits Settlements, probably numbered less than 25,000; twenty five years later this figure had increased seven-fold, and by 1921 fourteen-fiold."

Among later immigrants for the non-plantation sector, there were workers and supervisors for the construction of roads and railways, and also traders.

12. The table on page 8 shows the racial composition of the population of Peninsular Malaysia at various times during the period 1921 to 1970.

13. Differences in race constitute only one dimension of pluralism. Equally important are linguistic, religious, and cultural differences. The Malays speak Malay, the majority of the Indians speak Tamil, and the Chinese a variety of dialects, the most important of which were Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese, Tiechieu, Hainonese, Kayongsai, and Hokchiu. But what did weld the Chinese into a homogeneous unit from the point of view of the capacity to talk to each other freely was the adoption about the year 1920 of Kuo-Yu as the medium of instruction in Chinese schools in place of the several dialects which different schools had used till then. The potential of a common language to unify groups speaking different languages was thus seen in Malaya, but this unity also had the effect of strengthening racial separatism, in so far as the Chinese and the other races were concerned. As for religion, most Malays are Muslims, the Chinese are Buddhists and Confucians, and the majority of Indians are Hindus. Christianity cuts across the racial divisions, but the adherents are few. From the point of view of inter-racial marriages, a marriage in which

TABLE 1

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, 1921 – 1970

All Races	1921		1931		1947		1957		1970	
	Number (Thousands)	*Per Cent*	*Number (Thousands)*	*Per Cent*	*Number (Thousands)*	*Per Cent*	*Number (Thousands)*	*Per Cent*	*Number (Thousands)*	*Per Cent*
Malay	1,519	54.0	1,864	49.2	2,428	49.5	3,125	49.8	4,669	53.0
Chinese	856	29.4	1,285	33.9	1,885	38.4	2,334	37.2	3,136	35.6
Indian	439	15.1	571	15.1	531	10.8	707	11.3	934	10.6
Other	43	1.5	68	1.8	65	1.3	112	1.8	70	0.8
Total:	2,907	100.0	3,788	100.0	4,908	100.0	6,278	100.0	8,809	100.0

(*Source* : Fernandez, Dorothy Z. *et. al. The Population of Malaysia*. Paris. 1975. Table 1.4)

Fernandez, Dorothy Z. et. al. The P

one partner is a Confucian, Buddhist, Hindu or Christian, and the other a Muslim invariably requires conversion on the part of the former and thus tends to reduce the frequency of such marriages. Inter-racial marriages, in which both partners are non-Muslims, are capable of more flexible arrangements.

14. Compounding the above mentioned pluralisms there are certain factors — geographical, educational, economic — that tend to keep the races apart or cause invidious distinctions among them. Urban areas have a preponderance of Chinese and Indians, while the majority of the Malays live in rural areas. The Chinese and the Indians enjoyed certain educational advantages, which are fully considered in chapter 2. With urban residence and educational advantage are associated occupational and economic advantages, which are considered in Chapter 5. An important factor to be borne in mind in understanding the reasons for Chinese dominance in trade is that the technology of the abacus is a blessing even to the meanest Chinese for the acquisition of a basic numeracy that is an asset in business undertakings.

15. The achievement of the British is that they built a political unit out of independent Malay States, and contributed to their development through the exploitation of their rich natural resources, the introduction of new crops, and the establishment of infra-structural facilities such as roads, railways, and schools. At the same time, the British reliance on immigrant races for the tasks of development and modern sector employment needs, and the differential provision of educational facilities so as not to disturb the Malay social structure, which was in effect to perpetuate Malay disadvantage, have brought in their train problems that have bedevilled the country for some decades, and might persist for a few decades more.

The Population of Malaysia, Paris, 1975, Table 1.4)

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CHAPTER 2

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM : PLURAL, UNEQUAL, DIVISIVE

1. In this chapter, it is proposed to trace the beginnings and growth of the British Malayan school system, that could scarcely have been more successfully tailor-made to give rise to disunity and inequality, not so much by its plural nature as by its institutionalisation of separatism and imbalances among the racial groups of which the country came to be constituted. We have seen in chapter 1 how British Malaya became a plural society. A plural society need not necessarily have a plural educational system, as is evidenced quite clearly by the example of the United States. In British Malaya, pluralism, separatism, and imbalances resulted from a combination of historical, geographical, political, social, economic, and religious factors interacting among themselves with consequences that can only be described as regrettable, if not catastrophic, and requiring restitutional measures spread over several decades more.

Koranic Schools

2. Education of a strictly religious nature was available to Malay boys in Koranic schools or classes where they were taught to read verses from the Koran in Arabic. To teach them to read Malay was a low priority and was attempted to a small

extent, after some mastery over Arabic reading had been acquired, by a few Koranic teachers who were enthusiastic about Malay also. They were the exception rather than the rule.

THE PLURAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

3. The most meaningful parameter in terms of which the school system of Malaya may be classified and discussed is the medium of instruction. For convenience, schools using the English medium will be referred to as English schools, and schools using the Malay and the Chinese media will be referred to as Malay schools and Chinese schools respectively. Among the Indian languages, Tamil is spoken by the largest number of Indian immigrants, and schools using the Tamil medium will be referred to as Tamil schools.

English Schools in the Straits Settlements

4. The beginnings of the English school system were in the Straits Settlements — Malacca, Penang, and Singapore. British commercial and entrepreneurial enterprise led to the development of Penang and Singapore almost out of nothing, population-wise and consequently economy-wise and education-wise ; Malacca, on the other hand, had a population and a history, and some Koranic schools.

5. The priorities of the British government whenever it gained control over a territory or a piece of territory in Africa or Asia was firstly to ensure the maintenance of law and security in the territory, and secondly to devote its energies to the development and exploitation of the resources of the territory. The provision of education was not a priority, but this is not a matter for surprise as in Britain itself government initiative in education began only after 1870. Arthur Mayhew points out that in every dependency the British government at first ignored education.[1] This is true only in the sense that in nearly every dependency the British government did not at first directly finance education. It was, however, interested in the promotion of education of a sort — education through the

medium of English for a small number of the native population to serve the manpower needs of British government and commerce — but left its provision to Christian missionary agencies which generally accompanied British trade and the British flag. The government usually held out to them the prospect of a small amount of financial suport which, apart from its usefulness *per se*, was symbolical of government interest and approval that carried with them a certain attraction to the colonised people.

6. In Malaya, as pointed out by Cheeseman, "the first and chief factor" in the promotion of education was the Christian Church.[2] Its efforts could not be other than evangelical by the very nature of its commitment. The first missionary educational venture, intended for Chinese boys in Malacca in 1815, describes its purpose as being "to combine the diffusion of general knowledge with the promotion of Christianity."[3] The school was open to boys of all creeds, and it was stated that it was not specially designed for converting the pupils to Christianity, but rather for inculcating in them the tenets of Christianity with a view perhaps to "probable future conversion."[4] An Anglo-Chinese school was established in Malacca in 1818 by the London Missionary Society

> "for the purpose of promoting a reciprocal knowledge of the two languages amongst the English and Chinese and of communicating the Gospel to the latter."[5]

In Penang, the missionary purpose was to some extent disavowed, the sponsorship of the first English school being not entirely a missionary effort. The Anglican Chaplain in Penang, the Rev. R. S. Hutchings, canvassed public support and established in 1816 the Penang Free School for instructing children in "reading and writing English and in the common rules of Arithmetic."[6] It was stated that "great care be taken that the prejudice of parents averse to the Christian religion be not by any means violated."[7] In 1826, however, when a boys' boarding house was started in association with the school, all the boarders were regarded as Christians and given

religious instruction. In the circumstances, it could hardly be expected that the disavowal of the religious motive would be taken seriously. As far as the Chinese and the Indians were concerned, their religious persuasions did not deter them to the same extent as the Malays were deterred from seeking admission. The missionaries for their part made no more than faint attempts to enrol Malays, firstly because they were unresponsive, secondly because the gain in numbers through conversion was unlikely to be commensurate with the effort required, and thirdly because the British government was insistent that Muslim sensitivities should be respected. The result of the religous factor was that the English schools, with which the British in general or British missionaries in particular were associated, were patronised most readily by the Chinese, slightly less readily by the Indians, and only to a very negligible extent by the Malays. The Malays thus opted to some extent out of government employment as suitable conditions did not exist for them to patronise these schools, whose purpose, other than the evangelical one, was "the training of a race of intelligent and honest servants for the government."[8] To a greater degree, however, there was a deliberate policy on the part of the British to leave the Malays out of the English school system, as will be documented later in this chapter.

7. It is necessary to turn briefly at this stage to educational developments in India which, by virtue of the fact that at the period of time under consideration the Straits Settlements were within the jurisdiction of the Governor-General of India, provided guidelines in regard to the directions which education in the Straits Settlements should take. In 1854, the Court of Directors of the East India Company sent to the Governor-General of India a despatch elaborating the educational policy it would like to see implemented. The despatch had been prepared with India in view and on the basis of experience in India. It was, however, regarded as being applicable to other British territories in Asia as well. The Court of Directors, recognizing that education was a blessing to the natives and a sacred duty on the part of the British

government, was of the view that elementary education should be provided to the masses through the vernacular languages, using them as the means for the diffusion of European knowledge. It was prepared to establish and maintain schools but, as the government could not provide the means for the education of the whole country, voluntary efforts of individuals, and missionary or other societies, were to be encouraged by a system of grants-in-aid to schools established by them. Such grants were to be paid for secular instruction without reference to the question of religious instruction, except that such instruction should be confined to voluntary pupils. All government financed and aided schools were required to charge a fee from pupils. An adequate system of school inspection was to be organized by the appointment of Inspectors of Schools. The Court was also prepared to help in the establishment of university level institutions. A copy of the desptach was sent to the Governor of the Straits Settlements with a request that he should report on education in the Straits Settlements, and advise the Governor-General of India on the steps that should be taken to implement the intentions of the Court. In his reply, the Governor E. A. Blundell sought financial assistance to provide education through the medium of the native languages, which he listed as Malay and Chinese. The Governor-General of India was prepared to sanction a grant, which was but a fraction of what was sought, for providing education in Malay, which he referred to as the natural vernacular. He was opposed to any grant for the teaching of Chinese. The Court of Directors supported the Governor-General's decision regarding the amount of the grant, but it was not disposed to agree with the Governor-General that the fact that Chinese was not an indigenous language of the Settlements was itself a sufficient reason for refusing a grant for teaching Chinese. It thought that the "p opriety of such a grant" should depend, if finance permitted, upon the number of the Chinese population "permanently residing in the Straits" under British protection and "contributing to the resources of the State."[9] The proviso that grants could be given for teaching Chinese if finance permitted gave sufficient discretion on financial grounds to the Governor-General of India who

conveyed in 1858 the decision that for the time being only education through Malay would be assist d, as it could be regarded as the vernacular of all the Chinese born in the Straits Settlements. This latter assumption was undoubtedly a flight of fancy. A second question on which there was some disagreement was about the requirement laid down in the despatch of 1854 that only schools which levied a fee from the pupils should be eligible for grants. Governor Blundell strongly urged that it should be waived in respect of Malay medium schools. After protracted correspondence, the Governor-General agreed. The prime and sole object of the government was, however, to give elementary education in Malay. The ground was thus cleared for the establishment by the government of a few non fee-levying Malay elementary schools in the Straits Settlements as and when funds permitted.

8. The decision not to support English education came as a blow to British commercial circles which were interested in the availability of persons with some minimum competence in English to serve as clerks. The *Straits Times*, which was the mouth-piece of the British mercantile sector, urged that "every local-born child belonging to Chinese, Malay, Kling or other Asistic parentage" should be taught English, to bring the mass of the population in touch with the ruling class.[10] The plea was of no avail. The most that could be secured was a continuation of the existing level of support to English schools. Governor Cavenagh, who succeeded Governor Blundell, adopted the policy of leaving the town schools as they were and setting up Malay schools in rural areas to provide education for the Malay population.

9. When the British government did not meet the demand for English education, missions which filled the breach made no secret of their evangelical purpose. For example, a Roman Catholic English school was established in 1852 in Singapore stating in the prospectus that while every care would be taken to form the Catholic children in the solid maxims of Christianity there would be no interference with the religious tenets of other creeds. In 1872, however, it was reported that pupils

of other creeds were not allowed to withdraw from religious instruction. Thus, once a firm base was established, the initial promises regarding religious instruction were forgotten.

10. In 1870, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council was appointed to enquire into the state of education in the Straits Settlements. It was not in favour of the expansion of education through the medium of English, and expressed the view that the mother tongue was the best medium of instruction in the early years. It supported the extension of vernacular education in Malay. The inspiration for these recommendations came from educational policies pursued in India, although by this time the Straits Settlements had come under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office in Whitehall and not of the Governor-General of India.

11. The Annual Report on Education for the year 1882 stated as follows :

> "With the exception of instruction in their own language to Malays, it has hitherto been the practice to encourage instruction only amongst the different races in the Colony by the establishment of Government English Schools, and by giving grants for the results of the annual inspection of the private English schools."[11]

Thus Government English Schools were for the Chinese and the Tamils. No Malay could enrol unless four years of vernacular education were completed. Admission in such cases was to special classes from which transfer took place two years later to the same classes as for those who were taught English from the beginning. The requirement of four years of vernacular education made Malay students older in age than the others. Malay parents who were keen on English education asked that this requirement be waived, but their request fell on deaf ears. The government was persistent in its anxiety to get English education off its hands. It was stated in the Annual Report on Education for 1894 :

> "As opportunities present themselves it is advisable..... to allow missionaries and other bodies to undertake the work now being done by the Government English Schools, the government contributing towards their expenditure in the form of results grants."[12]

A complete closure of the Government English School system did not take place, but there was also no expansion. To hand English education over to the missions was to make it virtually inaccessible to Malays, but this consideration did not weigh with the government.

12. In so far as the scope of education provided through the medium of English is concerned, a noteworthy development commencing 1886 was the provision to compete annually for the Queen's Scholarship tenable at a British university. A handful of non-Malay students — mainly Eurasian and Chinese — succeeded in gaining entrance to British universities through this means. As far as the majority of the students was concerned, the following assessment was made by a Commission of Enquiry that reported in 1901 on the state of education in the Straits Settlements :

> "Many complaints have been made and are continually being made as to the quality of this education chiefly with regard to the alleged inadquacy of the English (spoken and written) of the boys who leave school to become clerks in Government, mercantile or other offices. This may be regarded at present as the purpose for which at least nine-tenths of the boys, who stay sufficiently long at school to acquire any working knowledge of English, are being trained. However advisable it may be that boys should be encouraged to take up other than clerical work, the demand for clerks is so large, and the popularity of this kind of employment so great among the boys and their parents, that the training of sufficient clerks must be regarded as perhaps the most important work to be performed by our schools."[13]

13. The establishment of institutions of higher education in Singapore proved a boon to those receiving education in English, and this meant the Chinese and the Indians to a large extent. The first two institutions of importance in this connection are the Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School established in 1905 (name changed to King Edward VII Medical School in 1912), and Raffles College established in 1929. Later in 1949 these two institutions were combined to constitute the University of Malaya. As Singapore had a predominantly Chinese population, access to these institutions was more open to the Chinese (even from the Malay States as affluent Chinese in them had or found it easy to establish contacts in Singapore) than to the Malays. Thus, these institutions contributed their share, though unwittingly, to the creation and perpetuation of Malay disadvantage.

14. The following table shows the extent of Malay disadvantage in English education in the Straits Settlements in 1901.

Table 1

Enrolment by races of boys in the English Schools of the Straits Settlements, 1901.

Racial group	*Number enrolled*	*Number of boys 5 to 14 plus in population*	*% of boys 5 to 14 plus enrolled*
Europeans and Eurasians	1,100	1,218	90.3
Malays	400	24,971	1.6
Chinese	4,500	16,144	27.9
Tamils	1,600	3,422	46.8

(*Source* : Loh, P. P. S. *Seeds of separatism : educational policy in Malaya* 1874 — 1900. Kuala Lumpur, 1975. Table 3 for columns 1 and 2 ; column 3 calculated by the present author.).

English schools in the Malay States :

15. Thus far we have concentrated on educational policies and progress in the Straits Settlements. The major directions of policy were evolved there, and were applied in the Malay States, subject to a few exceptions which will be duly noted.

16. As pointed out in chapter I paragraph 9, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang became Protected Malay States during the period 1874 and 1889. The guiding principle of British protection — protection being no more than a euphemism for rule — in regard to these States was that the social structure of the Malays should be left as undisturbed as possible so that the British would be quite free to exploit and develop the natural resources of the country. The policy indicated in the despatch of 1854 (see paragraph 7 above), as confirmed in 1870 by a Select Committee of the State Council of the Straits Settlements, spelled out the directions that educational policy should take in the Malay States. Certainly, the principle that the British government should not promote English education accorded with the government's vision for the Malay States that on no condition should the Malay social structure be disturbed. Free elementary education in Malay was all that Malays had to be provided as and when finances permitted.

17. Within limits, the British helped the non-Malay immigrants to receive an English education for which they had to pay. The British Resident of Perak, Hugh Low, opened in 1875 an English school in Kamuntung, a small town three miles north of Taiping, a mining town with a predominantly Chinese population. In 1882, the Perak State Council tried to add a new dimension to the declared interest of the British government in the promotion of education in the Malay language by suggesting that the need was for schools in which English was taught in addition to Malay. Low's response was to establish five additional English schools during the next seven years. They were all in Chinese populated urban areas, with the biggest of them established in 1883 in Taiping itself. Low intended them for the European, Chinese, and Indian races

and it was his expectation that they would provide a regular supply of clerks and subordinate staff for government and business undertakings. He also had another expectation in respect of the Taiping School, namely that the sons of the Malay aristocracy might be educated in it.

18. After a meeting with Chinese and Malay community leaders, Bloomfield Douglas, the first Resident of Selangor, reported as follows in 1882 :

> "Both Malay and Chinese were of opinion that not only vernacular schools should be established but that an English Teacher should be appointed to instruct those youths of the higher or trading classes who wish to read, write and speak English. It was evident to me that the sense of the meeting was that nothing moved them so much to the cause of education here, as giving the people an opportunity of learning the language of those who are now appointed by His Excellency under the Residential system to administer the laws and the general functions of the government."[14]

To expose the mass of the Malays to any English was, however, against British policy, and the British would not be persuaded to give English teachers to vernacular schools. All that Selangor had of English instruction was one small English class by 1890, established by Douglas' successor Frank Swettenham. When Swettenham was transferred as Resident of Perak in 1890, he was quite disturbed to find in Perak seven English schools as contrasted with the one small English class he had established in Selangor. No doubt he found some consolation in the fact that the enrolment of Malays was only 40 as contrasted with about 400 Chinese and Indians, the locations of the schools being an advantge to the latter two races. Swettenham made it quite clear that the provision of English schools should be strictly limited. He wrote as follows in 1891 :

> "The one danger to be guarded against is to teach English indiscriminately. It could not be well taught except in a

few schools, and I do not think it is at all advisable to attempt to give to the children of an agricultural population an indifferent knowledge of a language that to all but the very few would only unfit them for the duties of life and make them discontented with anything like manual labour. At present the large majority of Malay boys and girls have little or no opportunity of learning their own language, and if the Government undertakes to teach them this, the Koran, and something about figures and geography, (especially of the Malay Peninsula and the Archipelago), this knowledge and the habits of industry, punctuality and obedience that they will gain by regular attendance at school, will be of material advantage to them and assist them to earn a livelihood in any vocation, while they will be likely to prove better citizens and more useful members of the community than if imbued with a smattering of English ideas which they would find could not be realized."[12]

Again in 1893 Swettenham wrote as follows :

"Whilst we teach children to read and write in their own language, or in Malay, the 'lingua franca' of the Peninsula and Archipelago, we are safe."[13]

Note the phrase 'we are safe'. Safety for the British lay in providing no more than a minimum literacy and numeracy for the Malays, the need for English educated clerks for government and business purposes being met by educating in English a small number of the Chinese and Indian immigrants. To be sure, there were a few British officials who did not agree with Swettenham. For example, William Treacher who became Acting Resident of Perak after Swettenham wrote in 1891,

"The danger of teaching English indiscriminately has been referred to, but it is not likely to overtake Perak at present. Of the 60 schools, nine only are English teaching."[14]

He also pointed out that out of the 448 pupils attending English schools in Perak only 38 were Malays : 150 were Chinese, 216 were Indians, and 44 were Europeans and Eurasians. The fact that the urban population of the Protected Malay States was overwhelmingly made up of Chinese, Indians, Europeans and Eurasians was largely responsible for this state of affairs. Even in Selangor, when the government English school in Kuala Lumpur closed down in 1893 to make way for the Victoria Institution, there were 47 pupils on the roll, made up of 38 Chinese, 7 Eurasians, and 2 Malays.[17] Swettenham could not have been unaware of the educational disadvantage of Malays as a result of the Chinese and Indian predominance in the English school system. But who can blame him for his disregard of a modicum of justice for the Malays, when his prime concern was to ensure that the British would be safe for ever to exploit Malayan resources? The only bright spark on the horizon was the scholarship scheme introduced by J. P. Rodger, the Resident of Selangor, who was concerned about the disadvantaged position of the Malays in regard to employment. Stating that :

> "……in this Malay State, I think that something more should be done to encourage and assist promising Malay boys, who, unless they know English, have practically no chance of employment in Selangor, except as forest rangers, all clerical posts being monopolized by their Eurasian, Indian and Sinhalese competitors."[18]

he introduced in 1896 a scheme whereby scholarships were given to ten selected pupils from Malay medium schools to transfer to an English school in Kuala Lumpur. It was no more than a drop in the ocean, for the total number of Malay boys in Selangor was 1240. Later the number of scholarships was increased to 20. When Rodger was transferred as Resident of Perak in 1901, he introduced a similar scheme, offering scholarships tenable at the Taiping Central School. A more general scheme of expansion of facilities for giving Malays an opportunity to study English was, however, out of the question as long as Swettenham was at the helm of affairs. In fact,

Swettenham may be called the chief architect of Malay disadvantage in education. As Resident-General of the Federated Malay States, he raised in his report for 1897 the "question of how far we are justified in giving to our native population an education which unfits them for manual labour" thereby showing clearly the occupational future he envisaged for the Malays.[21] In 1899, he reiterated his views on Malay education as follows :-

> "What we want is a few schools where English will be as thoroughly taught as possible : where, in fact, the language of the school will be English, and the object of the education the employment of the boys in places where a knowledge of English is a necessity. Then for the great majority, there are the Vernacular Schools, which we already possess and to which we can add at any time as our funds permit. They are very good institutions, very useful, and they are appreciated. They do not attempt too much, but if they succeed in imparting the knowledge they profess to teach that is all that is required of them and probably as much as is good for the children who attend them."[22]

Public opinion in the British commercial community in Malaya, for its part, went along with Swettenham. For example, an editorial in the influential British newspaper *The Times of Malaya* agreed that to give the Malays a higher education would be to put in "their hands an intellectual weapon whereby they might attempt our undoing."[22] While the Malays were thus held down, the recruitment situation for government posts was that the British did "recruit all the upper branches of the service by Englishmen and the lower by Eurasians and Chinamen from the Colony and by men from India and Ceylon."[23]

19. Paradoxical as it may seem, it was in the guise of protection of the Malays, and the undisturbed maintenance of their social structure that the Malays were denied the advantages of an English education leading to improved opportunities

of employment. It was a discrimination pursued solely in British interests, for the less the social structure of the Malays was disturbed the easier it was for the British, with the co-operation of the Malay Sultans and chieftains, to exploit the natural resources of the country using immigrant labour. An ostensibly educational argument for the denial to Malays of admission to an English school, unless they had previously completed four years of education in Malay in a Malay school, was that the best medium of education in the early years of a child is the mother tongue, *a la* the Select Committee's recommendation for the Straits Settlements (see paragraph 10). Having special responsibility for the welfare of the Malays, the requirement was insisted upon in the case of Malays, but having no such responsibility towards the Chinese and the Indians, it was open to them to begin their education in English in English schools. Of course, the Chinese and the Indians had to pay fees, whereas the few Malays who were admitted after four years of vernacular education were exempted from fees. But the fact that they had to spend two years in special classes before joining the others in the main English stream meant that they were much older in years, like fish out of water among others who had grown up as classmates for several years together, and in a sense symbolical of educational disadvantage.

20. By the 1910s, the rank and file of the Malay population began to appreciate the advantages of an English education and sought it, eliciting no effective response from the British. For example, in 1913 the Malay villagers of two rice-growing districts, Lenggong and Krian in Perak, asked for the establishment of English schools in their villages, but the request was denied. In 1916 a group of Malay residents in the Klang district of Selangor asked that an English class be added to the Malay school at Klang. David Bishop, Inspector of Schools for Selangor, in supporting the request stated as follows :

> "I am not in favour of giving the Malays generally an English education, but in the case of town Malays, to

whom agricultural pursuits are not open, something ought to be done where possible, to place them on a more equal footing with those of other nationalities, and to give them the chance to qualify at a reasonable age for posts in the Government service or in various businesses or professions, now almost entirely held by Tamils and Chinese.

I gladly welcome this evidence of a desire on the part of the Malays to compete on equal terms with Asiatics of alien nationality : and such a desire should be fostered in every way. Compulsory education in the Vernacular, however desirable and necessary that may be, is undoubtedly a serious handicap to the Malays. Chinese and Tamil children may begin their English education as early as they please. The Malay boys must wait until they have completed or almost completed their Malay school course."[24]

Here was a British official admitting the injustice done to the Malays. The British Resident of Selangor was persuaded and arranged for such a class, but within one year it was closed on the orders of the Chief Secretary of the F. M. S. who considered it to be an unauthorized innovation. In 1919, the Malays of Klang made another appeal but it was turned down. The British fear was that the innovation might lead to a general request, which it was not in British interests to concede. In 1919, however, the requirement of four years of Malay education before English education could be had was slightly modified. Malay boys who had passed standard 3 could be admitted on the understanding that they continued to attend a Malay school one day a week till they passed standard 4 in the Malay language.

21. The mantle of Frank Swettenham for holding Malay education in check, fell on Richard Winstedt, who played this role effectively from 1915 to 1931. It was Winstedt who in 1913 refused the request from Lenggong and Krian villagers already referred to in the preceding paragraph. He became Acting Director of

Education in 1920, and Director of Education from 1924 to 1931, in which capacities he was a copybook version of Swettenham. In 1920, he commented not with enthusiasm but with dejection :

> "The awakening of the Malay race to the advantages of education, vernacular and English, has been rapid and widespread. Education is the daily topic of the Malay press."[25]

His response was to try as much as possible to restrain the Malay demand for English education, and in so far as vernacular education was concerned to restrict it only to the first four standards. Support for his position came from a Colonial Office adviser, who made a pronouncement that "nothing should be done to distract Malay villagers from the pursuit of an independent agricultural life."[26] The Malays persistently questioned the British policy that Malay pupils seeking admission to an English school should have first completed three/four years of education in Malay. They pointed out that this requirement gave the other communities an advantage in access to English education, and that by the time Malay students completed the requirement they were generally too old to be keen on starting another kind of education afresh and having eventually to be in classes containing much younger pupils of other nationalities. Winstedt was adamant in his refusal to remove the rule. The Sultan of Johore urged in a letter :

> "I cannot sufficiently stress the importance of the Malay boy learning English at an early age, in order that he may compete on equal terms with boys of other nationalities. In order to facilitate this I would suggest that English be taught in the vernacular schools side by side with Malay, so that on leaving they can enter the English school at a higher standard."[27]

This eminently reasonable suggestion was unacceptable to Winstedt. He defended his policy on the following grounds :

(*a*) the experience of educators elsewhere had shown that the best education for any child was one conducted in his own language, ideally until he reached the age of thirteen ;

(*b*) the Malay if he were not educated in his own language would 'become merged in surrounding races' and would lose his 'characteristics and religion' ;

(*c*) a native ruling class trained only in English would not be able to command the respect of the Malay peasantry;

(*d*) a Malay administrative official without a sufficient knowledge of Malay would not be able to carry out his duties effectively."[23]

Argument (*a*) was unmitigated hypocrisy at its worst, unless the Chinese and the Indians were a different order of human beings to whom this consideration did not apply. Argument (*b*) was a reiteration of the cloak of protectionism, which *inter alia* cut off the Malays from the light of learning. Arguments (*c*) and (*d*) were no answer to the case urged by the Sultan of Johore, for he did not suggest doing away with education in Malay. The arguments were, of course, never made public. They were intended for the Colonial Office in Whitehall.

22. Further documentation is unnecessary to establish the fact that the British did less than justice to the Malays in denying access to English education. The situation was compounded by the fact that it was the missions that supplemented official efforts at providing English education. The reluctance of Malays on religious grounds to patronise mission schools has been pointed out earlier and it is not necessary to dwell on it. The non-Malays profited not only from the few English schools set up by the government but also from missionary schools, several of which turned out to be prestigious institutions, prominent even at the present time. The mission schools received grants from the government, and in this sense revenue derived from Malays helped more in the education of non-Malays than of Malays.

23. The role of Chinese private initiative in providing an English education to their community has also to be recognized. One of the earliest institutions was the Anglo-Chinese school established in 1893 at Klang in Selangor. The government extended financial aid to it in 1896, although there was an earlier declaration that only education in Malay would be supported (see paragraph 7). In 1915, the management of this school was handed over to the Methodist Episcopalian mission.

English education for the Malay aristocracy :

4. In 1877, three years after Perak came under British "protection", arrangements were made by the British to provide an education in English to two Rajas, the sons of the ex-Sultan of Perak, at the Raffles Institution in Singapore. After a brief period of study there, both transferred to the Malacca High School, where they spent a number of years studying English. On completion of their courses of study, they are said to have joined the Perak government service.

25. In 1884 and 1885, two young Rajas, also from Perak, were educated at the Taiping Central School on the initiative of the British. One of them later went to Malacca High School. The Taiping Central School continued to enrol young Rajas from time to time, and it was reported in 1896 that four Rajas were attending it.

26. The next initiative in the matter of education in English for the Malay aristocracy is owed to Sultan Idris of Perak. He was responsible for the establishment at Kuala Kangsar in 1888 of a Raja Class by the British. It is known that some young Rajas enrolled in it. The Raja Class lasted just over a year. Some of the Rajas who attended the Raja Class later enrolled in the first government school that was opened shortly afterwards at Kuala Kangsar.

27. In Selangor, too, on representations made by the Raja Muda in 1889 to the British Resident, a Raja School was established at Kuala Lumpur the following year for teaching English to

the sons of the Rajas and chiefs of Selangor. It was closed down in January 1894, when it had an enrolment of twelve, and most of the young Rajas who were in it transferred to the Victoria Institute which had only recently been established as the principal English school in Selangor. On completion of their studies, none of them is recorded as having obtained employment in keeping with their aristocratic background, which itself was of different levels. One is reported to have become a Dresser in the Medical Department, one an Apprentice Tracer in the Public Works Department, one an Apprentice Tracer in the Survey Department, and one a Sanitary Board Inspector. Presumably, employment under the government was an attraction, irrespective of the level.

28. The Resident of Negeri Sembilan established in 1896 a school at Seremban for the sons of chiefs. In 1897, eighteen young Malays of rank were enrolled but two years later the school was closed for want of a teacher.

29. In Pahang, a Raja Class was established in 1897 at Pekan at the request of the Regent of Pahang. Three sons of the Sultan attended it, but the school lasted only for two years.

30. If one feature stands out in the preceding account of the provision made in the four Protected Malay States for the education of the sons of the Malay aristocracy, it is the inadequacy and *ad hoc* nature of the arrangements made. When in 1892, the Governor of the Straits Settlements wrote in his report on the Protected Malay States as follows :

> "……the policy regarding the education of Malays for employment in the administration……has been kept steadily in view as a cardinal feature in the government of the States, and has met with a considerable measure of success. Throughout the States there is an increasing number of Malays who with 'hereditary or customary claims to office' are being trained and are helping to educate themselves to take an active and responsible share in the Government."

it is clear that he was writing a piece of Victorian fiction.[29] The single exception to the neglect of the education of the Malay aristocracy is that of the eldest son of the Sultan of Perak who spent ten years in England from 1895 to 1905 under the charge of a tutor — a Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford — and was appointed on his return as the first Malay Assistant Commissioner of Police.

31. When the Protected Malay States became the Federated Malay States, many of the middle rank chiefs lost the traditional positions they had, as British Civil Servants were appointed to the posts created in their place under the new administrative structure. In 1903, among 160 posts in the Malay Civil Service, Malays occupied only three, and these, too, in the lowest ranks. This state of affairs could not go on for long, for financial reasons most of all as British officials cost a great deal of money. At a 'Conference of Chiefs' held in 1903, one of the items for discussion was the virtual absence of Malays from the Malay Civil Service. There was an exchange of views, but no concrete proposal to rectify the situation emanated. In 1904, J. P. Rodger, the Resident of Perak, recommended the establishment of a special school in the F. M. S. for the education of the sons and relatives of Rajas and chiefs to take up posts in the administration of their States. Rodger had a greater sensitivity than most of his compatriots to the responsibility owed by the British to the Malay chiefs. For example, he had stated in 1903 :

> "It must never be forgotten that these are Protected Malay States and not British Colonies and that the British Officials are here to advise and assist and not to supersede the Rulers in the administration of their own States. One of the most difficult problems to be solved is how best to employ in the Administration the sons and near relations of Rajas and Chiefs, who but for British intervention, would now be in full administrative charge of large and important districts."[30]

The reaction of Frank Swettenham, who held the dual posts of Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner

for the F. M. S. to Rodger's proposal, was that a special school was unnecessary and that the Malacca High School would serve the intended purpose. Fortunately for Malaya, he resigned shortly afterwards. William Treacher temporarily looked after his work, and although he had himself not been in favour of Rodger's proposal nonetheless referred it to the new Federal Inspector of Schools, R. J. Wilkinson, for his views. Wilkinson was strongly in favour of "a special residential school for education of Malays of good family and for the training of Malay boys for admission to certain branches of the government service."[51] He was, however, of the view that the student body should be,

> "made up partly of boys of good family whom it is desirable to educate because of the influence they are likely to exercise and partly of boys of mixed ability who are likely to be of good service to the State and to the advancement of their fellow countrymen."[52]

Wilkinson suggested Kuala Kangsar, capital of Perak, as the best site for the school on account of the support promised by the Sultan of Perak. Wilkinson's proposals were accepted by the Conference of Residents, at which Treacher himself agreed with them, and they were forwarded to William Taylor, the Acting High Commissioner, who did not support them. Later in the year, John Anderson, the new High Commissioner, discussed the proposal with Treacher and Wilkinson, and agreed to give it a three-year trial. The school began in January 1905 with three English masters and a local Koran teacher for providing religious instruction. The school was a great success, but

> "within a few years the main criterion for entrance was on grounds of social origin rather than scholastic merit and it became an institution catering very largely for the needs of the traditional elite only."[53]

The school was run along the lines of an English public school.

> "Often referred to in later years as 'the Malay Eton' the Malay Residential School rapidly acquired the manners and ethos of the English public school system."[54]

The school was given the name Malay College in 1909. Government for its part created in 1910 a separate Malay Administrative Service (M.A.S.) as a junior branch of the Malay Civil Service (M.C.S.), the recruitment to the former being confined exclusively to Malay College graduates. Thus the M.A.S. became the preserve of the Malay aristocracy. Provision was made for so-called special government classes of three years' duration which prepared those students who had already passed their Standard Seven Examination for eventual admission into the M.A.S. It was not until the 1920s that a small number of commoners came to be admitted to the College with a few of them later getting selected for the M.A.S.

Malay schools in the Straits Settlements :

32. As in the case of the English schools, the beginnings of the Malay school system were in the Straits Settlements. The plan announced for the Penang Free School (see paragraph 6) contained a provision that the children of Malay parents who were not desirous that they should learn English should be instructed by a Malay teacher to read and write Malay. A Malay school was started in the Free School premises in 1821 but it was shut down in 1826. Malay schools were started in certain rural districts as branches of the Penang Free School and they lasted for periods ranging from a few months to a few years. A Malay class was started in the Malacca High School in 1835, but discontinued in 1858 consequent upon the opening of Malay schools by the government in accordance with the policy enunciated in the 1854 Despatch of the Court of Directors (see paragraph 7). Between 1858 and 1870, eight Malay schools were established in Malacca. In point of fact, it is only in Malacca that the government's attempts to establish Malay schools were reasonably successful in the Straits Settlements, three established in Province Wellesley also having failed. Such was the situation upto 1870.

33. In 1871, A. M. Skinner, Acting Magistrate in Province Wellesley, conceived the idea of re-establishing Malay schools

on a new basis, namely in association with Koranic classes. The following rules applied to these schools :

(*a*) The morning lessons should be devoted to instruction in Malay, and the afternoon sessions to the Koran ;

(*b*) Instruction in Malay and instruction in the Koran should be kept strictly separate ;

(*c*) The allowance from the government to the teacher being in respect of Malay lessons, the parents should arrange to pay the teacher extra for teaching the Koran.

Skinner's plan showed promise of success, and he was appointed Inspector of Schools in 1872. In 1872 the number of Malay schools was 16 with an enrolment of 596, but by 1892 there was an enrolment of 7218 in 189 schools.[39] In 1882, the Malay school at Telok Blanga in Singapore was converted into a Training College for Malay teachers. It was closed down in 1894. Another development in the 1880s was that in response to a marked interest among the urban Malays to learn English, it was decided in 1887 that any Malay boy who had passed the fourth standard in a Malay school should be given free education at a government English school. Without fulfilling the requirement of four years' Malay education (see paragraph 11 for a discussion of its implications), English schools would not admit Malay pupils even on a fee-levying basis. It was much less of a concession than it purported to be.

Malay schools in the Malay States :

34. With the imposition of British "protection", the British made an almost immediate start establishing two schools at Klang (1875) and Bandar (1876) in Selangor, and one at Sayong (1878) in Perak. The school at Klang was moved later to the new capital Kuala Lumpur. No further expansion took place until 1882, when the Governor of the Straits Settlements issued a directive to the British Resident in the Protected Malay States to take action to promote vernacular education. The

latter did establish a number of schools, but the attendance was poor and some of them had to be closed down. The reason was that the Malays saw little value in being taught elementary reading and writing in Malay. A certain amount of improvement was seen from the 1890s, with the extension to the Malay States of Skinner's plan (described above). While the number of schools and pupils increased there was no expansion in the curriculum. Two statements by Frank Swettenham, quoted earlier in paragraph 18 in connection with the discussion of English schools need repetition here on account of their applicability to Malay schools :

(*a*) "Whilst we teach children to read and write and count in their own languag we are safe."[36]

(*b*) "...for the great majority, there are the vernacular schools...They are very good institutions...They do not attempt too much, but if they succeed in imparting the knowledge they profess to teach that is all that is required for them, and probably as much as is good for the children who attend them."[37]

Note the implication of the concluding words of the second quotation. Only four years of elementary education were provided, and Swettenham thought it as much as was good for the Malays. Although it was he who denied the Malays anything better in education, he put the blame on the Malays. For example, after extolling the notable economic and social progress achieved in Malaya after British intervention, Swettenham had this to say at the Rulers' conference held in Perak in 1903 :

"The Malays have in all this been great gainers, and I only regret that their national characteristics make it difficult, though not impossible, for them to take full advantage of the opportunities which now come begging to their doors."[38]

Opportunities, forsooth ! As Loh points out :

"...the Malay school curriculum, virtually up to the

outbreak of World War II, did not develop beyond the provision for essentially a four-year primary education, with its main focus on the basic three Rs, practical work in the school's vegetable plots set aside for the study of elementary agriculture and the learning of habits of cleanliness and punctuality."[59]

The inadequacy of the curriculum was compounded by a shortage of teachers and the absence of training except for a small number of them. One can hardly disagree with Allen's assessment of Swettenham :

> "His philosophy of education, in fact, was hardly a philosophy at all. It was a rationalization of the British ruling class in Malaya with emphasis on the development of the country."[60]

Swettenham's outstanding achievement was that he restricted as much as he could access by the Malay masses to an education in English or a higher education in Malay, and contrived to ensure that they would remain cultivators and fishermen while commerce, trade, and the lower ranks of bureaucracy were dominated by the Chinese and Indians. In the Federal Inspector of Schools, J. M. Driver, Swettenham found a kindred spirit who wrote in 1899 :

> "At present in the vernacular schools no effort is being made — nor is it required — than to impart the rudiments of a vernacular education to Malay boys."[61]

Writing again in 1902, he expressed satisfaction about the curriculum :

> "... it is sufficient for the ordinary requirements of Malay boys who will become bullock waggon drivers, padi-growers, fishermen, etc., and enable them by the time they have passed the fourth standard to read or write the simple literature of their tongue either in Jawi or Roman character, to keep accounts if they become small shop-keepers, and to work simple problems in the money currency, weights and measures of their country."[62]

J. P. Rodger's was a lone voice asking for a better deal for the Malay schools. He wrote in 1900 :

> "The various vernacular schools are doing good work, but they require to be supplemented by some scheme for secondary education, and also by a more extended system of technical education."[43]

It was too revolutionary to be heeded, for it was contrary to what the British expected of the Malay masses — that they would continue to to be engaged for ever in subsistence agriculture and fishing, pursuing their occupations diligently and assiduously with unquestioning obedience to their British masters. One bright streak on the horizon of Malay vernacular education was the scheme of scholarships, introduced by Rodger (see paragraph 18), tenable at English schools.

35. Reference has already been made to the Malay Teachers College at Telok Blanga in Singapore which was started in 1882 and closed down in 1894. There was a vacuum in teacher training until 1898 when a Teacher Training College was established in Taiping as a joint venture between the governments of Perak and Selangor. It was closed down in 1900 when the combined Colony — F. M. S. Teacher Training College was opened at Malacca in 1900.

36. After the creation of the F. M. S., as and when a sufficient number of government Malay schools was established, legislation was enacted to compel the attendance of boys between the ages of 7 years and 14 years. Negeri Sembilan was the first in 1900, followed by Pahang in 1908, Johore and Kedah in 1915, Perak in 1916, and Selangor in 1923. Generally speaking, the legislation was ineffective, though fines were imposed on some parents.

37. The role that Frank Swettenham had in limiting the scope of educational opportunity for Malays was played even more successfully by R. O. Winstedt, who was associated with Malay education from 1916 to 1935. Committed to the doctrine that the Malay masses should continue for ever to

pursue farming and fishing in the countryside "where the economic happiness and economic interests of their race have lain for centuries," developing no aspirations that might constitute a threat to British hegemony and the peaceful exploitation by the British of the resources of the country using by and large the labour and skills of Chinese and Indian immigrants, he went so far as to lop off the fifth primary grade which a few Malay schools had, as it might make Malay youth aspire to become clerks and thereby cause "economic dislocation and unrest."[14]

38. The Sultan Idris Training College (S.I.T.C.) was started in 1922. The contrast between the Malay College (see paragraph 31) and the S.I.T.C. has been pointed out in the following terms :

> "The antithesis between the S.I.T.C. and Kuala Kangsar, though it can be exaggerated is an instructive one, for the schools belonged in every sense to two different worlds, both old and new. On the one hand, at Kuala Kangsar, there were the sons of the traditional class and the wealthy, undergoing training for entry into the English-speaking world of government and administration and occasionally the professions ; on the other, at S.I.T.C., the sons of the peasantry and the poor, undergoing training for return to the Malay-speaking world of the rural village school. Yet there were equally striking resemblances between Malay College and S.I.T.C. as elite-producing institutions of a special kind. As residential schools based broadly on the English public school pattern they shared many features of organization and *esprit de corps* ; both gave a secondary level eduction (in the case of S.I.T.C. the only secondary education available in Malaya) ; and perhaps most important of all they drew their students from every quarter of the peninsula and subjected them alike to a common experience."[15]

Although S.I.T.C. was the show-piece of the British in so far as the training of Malay teachers was concerned, there was no provision for teaching English to the teachers in training.

They were carefully insulated from English lest they be tempted to try to teach English to their students when they get posted to Malay schools after training. O.T. Dussek, who was the Principal from 1922 to 1936, stated as follows in a speech he made in 1935 ;

> "The Malay schools must be run for those who will and must remain in the villages. They must have no connection and no point of contact with English. English and vernacular make poor bed-fellows."[16]

Poor bed-fellows for poor village children, let us say. But should it have been so for their teachers ? To say the least, this is a strange position to have been taken by the race chosen by God to bring the blessings of the English language and western civilization to the non-white races of the world. Opportunism could hardly have expressed itself in more convincing terms.

Chinese schools

39. Education in China was valued in accordance with Confucian traditions, especially as prevalent from the time of the Ming dynasty when the examination system came to be institutionalised as the appropriate means for selecting for official positions the ablest members of the community. Emigrants from China carried with them their value system, of which education was an integral component. In Malaya, in places where there was a fair number of Chinese speaking a certain dialect, facilities were organized by the Chinese immigrants themselves for Chinese boys to get together under a teacher, and learn the ideographic writings of their ancestors and the sacred lore of their sages. Parents who could use the abacus instructed their children in it, and the children were thereby trained to assist their parents with accounts in their monetary transactions. The more affluent Chinese who thought that their sons should receive the benefit of a higher education sent them to China. Before continuing the story of Chinese organized schools, we may now turn our attention to the provision made for education in Chinese by the missions and the government.

40. The missions were the first to interest themselves in the education of Chinese boys in the Straits Settlements. In 1815, the first Christian school for Chinese boys was opened in Malacca by the London Missionary Society "to combine the diffusion of general knowledge with the promotion of Christianity."[3] Provision for instruction in Chinese was made in the Singapore Free School, established in 1934, but it is said to have been temporarily discontinued after several months when the American missionaries opened a Chinese Free School. With the conversion of the Singapore Free School to the Singapore Institution, Chinese classes were re-started in 1838-39 and sporadically continued until about 1850. The controversy, following upon the Despatch of 1854, as to whether the government should support Chinese education has already been referred to in paragraph 7, and need not be repeated here. It was, however, in 1876 that government support for Chinese schools was altogether stopped.

41. In the F.M.S., the British took no interest in the provision of educational facilities for the Chinese with the exception of two schools founded in the 1880s as part of the educational establishment of the State of Selangor. When a proposal was made by the Inspector of Schools for Perak to establish state-financed Chinese schools in Perak, J. Driver, the Inspector of Schools of the F.M.S., opposed it, expressing the following point of view :

> "I find myself generally in sympathy with the report of the State Inspector, but cannot share with him his desire to spread vernacular education other than Malay in these States. The policy of keeping the children of alien immigrants aliens for the next generation is surely not the best, and is not the policy usually followed in any country, even where foreign immigrants are numerous. It would be doubly undesirable here, where every effort should be made, in view of the abnormally small child population to break down the language barrier as far as possible and make, at least, the new generation regard this as their

homeland. I have previously pointed out what inherent difficulties would attend a multi-lingual scheme of education in these States. It would mean giving vernacular education in two or even three dialects of Chinese, in Tamil, and near the big towns in Bengali ; although a free education in the vernacular of the country is already provided."[48]

42. The denial of government support for Chinese schools made little difference to the Chinese community who proceeded to establish schools to meet their needs. At about this time, mainland China also evinced a great interest in the education of overseas Chinese, especially those in South-east Asia. It is recorded that between 1905 and 1909 several education missions were sent to Malaya to inspect the schools. Financial grants are reported to have been made to the schools, and graduates from Peking University were sent to teach in them. These activities were halted by the civil war that led to the establishment of the Republic in 1911. Representatives of the Ministry of Education were, however, sent in 1914 and 1915 to inspect the state of the Chinese schools in South-east Asia.

43. The years immediately following the first World War may be regarded as a watershed in the development of the Chinese school system in Malaya. The number of Chinese schools rapidly increased, and they "gave their pupils a Chinese education and brought them up to regard themselves as subjects of the Republic of China in a foreign country."[49] Most importantly, motivated by the decision in mainland China that Kuo-Yu would be the national language, the Chinese schools that were using various dialects as their media of instruction began in the year 1920 to switch over to Kuo-Yu as the common medium in all schools. This step was responsible for the creation in Malaya of a Chinese *community* out of diverse groups which had hitherto not been able to converse with one another :

> "With the adoption of Kuo-Yu as the medium of instruction in Chinese schools of Malaya, it became possible for Chinese students from different home environments, whose parents had migrated from different areas of China to communicate and interact almost for the first time."[50]

The adoption of the new medium (it was new to schools using other dialects) made it even more necessary than before to get down teachers from the mainland, and they had a certain homogeneity that was lacking earlier. To be sure, mainland China was very soon to become a scene of conflict between the communists, who had a coherent and positive ideology, and the anti-communists whose ideology was negative, being best described as anti-communism. Both kinds were imported to Malaya through the teachers and the books, but the linguistic uniformity was pervasive. There were many political activists among the teachers who came from China. In fact, some of them emigrated to avoid political persecution. Ideological differences were brought into schools, and the schools became centres of political strikes and indoctrination. In some cases, one group of teachers indoctrinated students to drive away teachers of a different political persuasion. The Chinese schools in Malaya became centres of indoctrination, for or against communism, and it was the communist ideology that prevailed in large measure, its coherence and singleminded vision being a source of great strength. The British government became quite jittery :

> "Chinese schools were becoming instruments of propaganda for political parties outside Malaya whose objectives were often entirely opposed to the policy of the Malayan government. Quite apart from the use of education for out-and-out subversion, it was clear that the government could not leave uncontrolled a system of education turning out boys and girls who were to all intents and purposes members of a foreign State, owing no duty to the country they lived in."[3]

In 1920, the British government enacted legislation for the registration of private schools. It was strongly opposed by the Chinese community. By 1923, a system of grants-in-aid was proposed for schools willing to submit themselves to certain conditions, and to government inspection. It was a requirement for receiving a grant that instruction should be in the various dialects and not in Kuo-Yu. This step was master-minded by R. O. Winstedt, the Director of Education, to prevent the Chinese from developing a sense of community through the use of a common language. Most Chinese schools, however, preferred to use Kuo-Yu and not be part of the grant-in-aid system. However, the government appointed high ranking officials both in the Straits Settlements

and in the Federated Malay States to oversee the work of the Chinese schools. As the content of some of the textbooks was subversive, an arrangement was worked out between the government and the schools in terms of which textbooks free of such content would be published in Shanghai and supplied to Chinese schools in Malaya. The focus of the books continued, however, to be China, and "there was no mention in them of Malaya's history, geography, trade, commerce, its mixed population."[52] Not having succeeded in discouraging the spread of Kuo-Yu, the British government recognized it in 1935 as a language qualifying for grants. This encouraged many Chinese schools to enter the grant-in-aid scheme, thereby submitting themselves to government inspection. Altogether, the Chinese school system was quite a large one with nearly 25,000 pupils in them by 1939.

Tamil schools in the Straits Settlements and the Malay States :

44. The Indian immigrants in Malaya were linguistically heterogeneous, but Tamil was the language of the majority, as indeed it was of the few thousand emigrants from Ceylon to Malaya. The plan announced for the Penang Free School (see paragraph 6) contained a provision that the children of Indian parents who were not desirous that they should learn English should be instructed in Tamil. A Tamil school was started in the Free School premises in 1821 but discontinued in 1823.

45. In spite of the decision that education through the medium of only the Malay language (see paragraph 7) should be supported, a Tamil school was established at Tanguerah in Malacca about the year 1865. A few other schools were established in the Straits Settlements by the government or by missionaries, grants-in-aid being paid to the latter. In 1876, however, the government decided once more that only English and Malay schools would be supported, the former as English was the language of the Government, the latter as Malay was the vernacular of the country, and that no support would be extended to Chinese and Tamil schools.[53] An exception was soon made in the case of mission schools established in estate areas in the Malay States, and a few more exceptions followed later.

46. As from 1900 there was a more positive attitude on the part of the British towards the establishment or support of Tamil schools, promoted by the need to induce a greater flow of

immigration from India to work on the rubber plantations and in other undertakings. The government established a few Tamil schools in rural areas to provide educational opportunities for the children of employees in the Public Works Department and the Railways. Besides these schools, there were a few Tamil schools provided by Christian missionaries, Hindu missions, and by private individuals. In the case of Indian labour on the rubber plantations, as from 1923 the managements were required by an amendment to the F.M.S. Labour Ordinance of 1921 to provide and staff Tamil schools for the children of the estate workers. The Tamil school was an instrument of welfare, and also made economic sense on the ground that if the immigrant labourer

> "is to work harder, longer, and more continuously, education must inculcate the ideas of sanctity of contract and of ordinary honesty to his employees."[54]

The planters themselves were not enthusiastic about the burden imposed upon them, so much so that they have been described as "the reluctant custodians of the education of the vast majority of Indian children".[55] No Tamil school in Malaya extended beyond standard 4 ; in fact, most terminated with standard 2 or 3. The textbooks used were all imported from South India, which was also the major source for the supply of teachers. The Tamil schools were really dead-end schools. Avenues of social mobility were open only to those who had access to the government or missionary English schools, which were mostly in urban areas.

Summary

From the foregoing account, it would be clear that the school system that came into being during British rule was (a) plural, both racially and linguistically in that by and large the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians attended racially segregated schools using different language media ; (b) unequal in the opportunities provided to different linguistic groups, the Chinese being the most advantageously placed with a large measure of access to education in the English medium, the Indians somewhat less so, and the Malays being the least advantaged with access to English largely denied to them on par-se in government schools, compounded by their own reluctance to avail themselves on religious grounds of facilities provided by Christian missions ; (c) divisive by virtue of the combined operation of the two factors mentioned above.

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CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS UPTO INDEPENDENCE

1. We have seen in Chapter 1 how economic, strategic, and political considerations on the part of the Malay Sultans, the British, the Dutch, and the Siamese led to a political unification of independent principalities under Malay Sultans (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang,) principalities under Malay Sultans but subject to Siamese protection (Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu, and Kelantan), and Malacca, a Dutch outpost. The Malay Sultanate of Johore was unique in that it did come under British protection, but in a somewhat less rigid way than the others. Penang, Malacca, and Singapore known collectively as the Straits Settlements or the Colony were directly under British governance, while the Malay States, both the federated and the unfederated, were ostensibly under Malay governance with British advice. Advice was given unsought as orders to be carried out or as administrative measures implemented by the British themselves in matters of political, strategic, or economic interest to the British. The Sultans were the *de jure* rulers, sharing *de jure* rule with the British who were the *de facto* rulers. It was only in matters pertaining to Malay custom and religion that the Sultans had a free hand. The British interfered even in the matter of succession to the Sultanate when a Sultan died. Under the British, a unified though by no means racially united Malaya was born.

2. The British followed a policy of according special treatment to the Malays and to the Malay language, allegedly in the interests of the Malays and the exercise of "protection".

but some of the measures taken leave no doubt that the paramount consideration underlying them was the safeguarding of British colonial and commercial interests. In providing a free education in the Malay medium to the rural Malays, care was taken to limit its scope so that the products of the schools would not aspire to modern sector employment, with the exception of the insignificant number who were selected for scholarships. The bulk of modern sector employment went to the Chinese and the Indians, who enjoyed the advantages of urban residence, greater access than the Malays to the few English schools provided by the government or by the missionaries (the Malays being placed at a disadvantage in seeking enrolment by the requirement to complete four years of Malay education), as well as to the higher education institutions established in predominantly Chinese populated Singapore. The following is a fair assessment :

> "The British evinced little concern for communal harmony or cooperation ; they ruled Malaya indirectly through Malay rulers while relying on Chinese and Indian entrepreneurs and workers for their economic contribution to the modern economy."[1]

3. The British government took responsibility for the education of Malay administrators by establishing the Malay College in 1905 for the sons of Malay Sultans and chiefs, and also decreed that only Malays would be eligible to sit the examination for appointment to the Malayan Administrative Service. These measures -though intended to confer protection and privilege on Malays- were counterproductive in so far as the adaptation of Malays to modern sector employment was concerned in that educated Malays were content to carry out the maintenance roles of middle-level government bureaucracy instead of facing the competitive challenges of participation in trade, commerce, and other entrepreneurial activities. Denial of access to the middle rungs of the government bureaucracy made the Chinese and the Indians all the more

determined to make good in the various socio-economic sectors of the country. In course of time, they developed the requisite entrepreneurial and organizational skills, apart from enjoying the immeasurable advantages of an early start. In so far as the abler alumni of the Malay College were concerned, it was an open door policy only in relation to the middle levels of the governmental bureaucracy. Among those appointed to the Malayan Administrative Service (M.A.S.) on the results of a stiff competitive examination open to Malays only, it was envisaged that some would be promoted in course of time to the Malayan Civil Service (M.C.S.), for which recruitment was ordinarily through a competitive examination held in England, and as such the exclusive preserve of British aspirants. But, the first Malay to be promoted to the specially created Supernumerary Class V grade of the M.C.S. (Junior in rank to direct British recruits who were about 22 years of age) was the 39 year old son of the ex-Sultan of Perak, and the year was 1917. In 1921, there was a slight change of policy by which Malays from the M.A.S. were promoted to the M.C.S. without attaching an inferior status to them, but the number of posts available on this basis was only ten even by 1931.

4. Concern about the employment situation of Malays in general in the government service led to the appointment in 1922 of a committee to report on the employment of Malays in the government service. The committee recommended the expansion of educational opportunities in English and employment opportunities for Malays. It was decided by the government that, if Malays were available for vacant posts, no non-Malays would be considered. Educational opportunities in English for Malays were slightly expanded, firstly by opening a few non-urban English schools and secondly by making it possible for Malay students in Malay schools to transfer to English schools after passing standard 3 in Malay and receive the benefits of a free English education, changing the previous requirement of passing standard 4 in Malay. As of 1938 the number of Malays in several key departments taken together numbered only 1,742 as against 4,938 from other races.[2]

5. The Chinese population, who were in large numbers in the entrepot towns, other urban centres, and in tin mining areas were an economic asset as well as a political liability. The clashes among their clans and secret societies in the tin mining areas called for constant police efforts to maintain the peace. The adoption of Kuo-Yu as the national language of China in 1918 had political repercussions in Malaya *viz* education. Kuo-Yu was adopted in 1920 as the medium of instruction in most Chinese schools in Malaya, replacing the various dialects that had hitherto been used in different schools, brushing aside a British attempt to stall this development (see chapter 2 paragraph 43). A common Chinese consciousness sprang up from the capacity created by Kuo-Yu for Chinese groups speaking various dialects to communicate with one another. To the extent that it made possible a united Chinese front against the British, the unification created by the adoption of Kuo-Yu was regretted by the British. The rapid spread of communism among the Chinese in Malaya, and the formation of the Chinese Communist Party in Malaya in 1930 were owed to the use of Kuo-Yu. The communist — Kuomintang clashes also spread to Malaya. With great sagacity, the British contrived an attempt (see chapter 4 paragraph 41) in 1951 to initiate a move to abolish Chinese medium schools and make English and Malay the media on grounds of building a unified Malayan nation. The attempt was unsuccessful, but here we see the interesting phenomenon of the language medium serving as a unifying force for the Chinese and causing political repercussions from the British point of view and the British political — educational response to it of trying to divert this development by promoting English and Malay as the appropriate media of instruction for children of all races in Malaya, allegedly to build a united nation. The stated motive would have been considered laudable and less suspect, if the British had not attempted earlier to stall Chinese unification through a common language, or evinced a concern for nation-building in the many plural societies in the British colonial empire. In the light of British policies till then, this concern for Malayan unity was not entirely unselfish and has to be taken as a pragmatic and clever response to a local problem.

When Malaya faced the threat of invasion by the Japanese, the Malays themselves were indifferent to it, but the Chinese, particularly those of a communist persuasion, organized themselves into a Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and were given "rapid training in the arts of sabotage" by the British on the eve of their withdrawal.[3] The MPAJA engaged in guerilla warfare, harassing the Japanese. Later, British intelligence officers made contact with the MPAJA and agreement was reached to supply it with arms as part of a future British plan to recapture Malaya from the Japanese. The plan was never implemented as it became unnecessary with Japan's unconditional surrender. After the war ended, the MPAJA formed itself into a Malayan People's Anti-British Army to free Malaya from the British, and convert the country into a communist state. Those who belonged to it clashed with the anti-communist Chinese, who did not support them, and with the British government.

7. In 1946, the British government proposed the creation of a Malayan Union, comprising the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the unfederated Malay States. The move was seen as an attempt to take away powers hitherto exercised by the Sultans, and to reduce the States to the same political level as the Settlements in the matter of control with a British governor at the head of the Union. Moreover, an erosion of the principle of 'special rights' for the Malays was seen in the definition of citizenship in the Malayan Union. The latter was to the effect that all those who were born in the country or had a minimum period of residence in the territories that would comprise the Union would be given Malayan citizenship. The Malays rallied under the banner of a newly formed political party, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), to express their vehement opposition to the British government's plan under which almost the entire Chinese and Indian population of Malaya would have gained citizenship rights. The Union was inaugurated on 1 April 1946, but many of the constitutional provisions were not brought into operation, and meanwhile the British government

worked out a new formula, namely the formation of the Federation of Malaya. At the head of the Federation there was to be a British High Commissioner, while each of the States would have a Chief Minister, who would be advised by British advisers. The special position of the Malays was to be safeguarded by limiting access on the part of non-Malays to citizenship. Almost the entire Malay population became citizens, while the majority of the non-Malays were denied citizenship. The Federation of Malaya was proclaimed in 1948. The denial of citizenship was strongly objected to by the non-Malays, especially the Chinese who argued that the provisions were too restrictive. The Indian opposition could be ignored, but not the Chinese, for this was the period of the communist (mainly Chinese) insurgency in the jungles of Malaya. After all, the Chinese who were seeking more favourable citizenship conditions were the loyal elements, whom it was impolitic for the British government to alienate. The Chinese for their part sought the co-operation of the Malays. One of the conditions on which this co-operation was obtained was by an expressed willingness to accept Malay as the national language. With the Malays consenting to a relaxation of the conditions for citizenship, the British government was able to make them more liberal in 1952. The Alliance Party formed during the same year consisted of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). In 1955, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) also joined the Alliance party, which was able to win 51 out of the 52 elected seats in the Federal Legislative Council. Negotiations continued between the Malays and the Chinese to arrive at a further compromise regarding citizenship. A further relaxation of the requirements for citizenship was made in 1957, and it was a condition of the agreement between the Malay and the Chinese leaderships that in return for a relaxation of the requirements for citizenship and full freedom to engage in economic activity, the Chinese would agree to —

(*a*) a special position being accorded to the Malays ;

(*b*) a reservation for Malays of a certain proportion of appointments in the public service ; and

(*c*) the acceptance of Malay as the national language.

Milton Esman makes the following comment about this compromise :

> "This political bargain realized great benefits for all parties, in many cases more than the original participants had expected to achieve. The Malays gained political independence control of government, and a polity which was to be Malay in style and its system of symbols. In return the Chinese gained more than overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia had dreamed of — equal citizenship, political participation and office holding, unimpaired economic opportunity, and tolerance for their language, religion and cultural institutions."[4]

It is important to note that the conditions listed above were part of a deal made under British auspices, and not the sequel to any post-independence Malay chauvinism. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the British had accorded a special position to the Malays by restricting to the Malays recruitment to the Malayan Administrative Service. The British had also introduced a legislative measure in terms of which certain tracts of land could be alienated only to Malays. Moreover, the educational recommendations of 1951 (see Chapter 4 paragraph 4) elevated the Malay language more or less to the level of English by suggesting the discontinuance of other language media. Seen in this light, the agreement of 1957 was tantamount to a stamp of approval by the Chinese and the Indians of the continuation in independent Malaya of the positive discrimination practices of British times, together with the added provision that Malay would be the national language. Clauses in the new Constitution institutionalized and gave them the sanctity of the law. For example, Article 152 of the Federation of Malaya Independence Act of 1957 specified that the national language shall be the Malay language. It was provided at the same time that no

worked out a new formula, namely the formation of the Federation of Malaya. At the head of the Federation there was to be a British High Commissioner, while each of the States would have a Chief Minister, who would be advised by British advisers. The special position of the Malays was to be safeguarded by limiting access on the part of non-Malays to citizenship. Almost the entire Malay population became citizens, while the majority of the non-Malays were denied citizenship. The Federation of Malaya was proclaimed in 1948. The denial of citizenship was strongly objected to by the non-Malays, especially the Chinese who argued that the provisions were too restrictive. The Indian opposition could be ignored, but not the Chinese, for this was the period of the communist (mainly Chinese) insurgency in the jungles of Malaya. After all, the Chinese who were seeking more favourable citizenship conditions were the loyal elements, whom it was impolitic for the British government to alienate. The Chinese for their part sought the co-operation of the Malays. One of the conditions on which this co-operation was obtained was by an expressed willingness to accept Malay as the national language. With the Malays consenting to a relaxation of the conditions for citizenship, the British government was able to make them more liberal in 1952. The Alliance Party formed during the same year consisted of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). In 1955, the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) also joined the Alliance party, which was able to win 51 out of the 52 elected seats in the Federal Legislative Council. Negotiations continued between the Malays and the Chinese to arrive at a further compromise regarding citizenship. A further relaxation of the requirements for citizenship was made in 1957, and it was a condition of the agreement between the Malay and the Chinese leaderships that in return for a relaxation of the requirements for citizenship and full freedom to engage in economic activity, the Chinese would agree to —

(*a*) a special position being accorded to the Malays ;

Malays, Chinese, and Indians alike. To qualify for independence, a united front was essential, and it was secured by a bargain in which the non-Malay races were given citizenship on a fairly liberal basis and permitted to practise their trades and professions ; in return for these rights, the non-Malay races recognized the legitimacy of certain special privileges of positive discrimination which the Malays enjoyed under British rule. The non-Malays also agreed additionally to accept Malay as the national language of the country. Racial accord having been reached, Britain decided that the time for independence had come, and it was proclaimed with effect from 31st August 1957.

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CHAPTER 4

EDUCATION FOR NATION-BUILDING : AN ABORTIVE BRITISH ATTEMPT AND ITS SEQUEL

1. In this chapter, we trace the genesis and the metamorphosis of the idea that the primary school could be used as an instrument for nation-building in a plural society by bringing together into it children of diverse groups, divided on racial, linguistic and religious lines, and instructing them through two common languages. It was first adumbrated in 1951 in the Federation of Malaya by the British. This concern of British colonial rule for nation-building was quite unusual. Britiain's colonies in many parts of the world included several that were plural societies. In none of them did Britain express any interest in the possibility of using for nation-building education in general terms, or in such specific terms as that the medium of instruction in the primary school should be the instrument. The proposal was all the more suspicious in Malaya as the British tried to stall in the early 1920s the use of Kuo-Yu as a common medium of instruction for Chinese schools, when it would have served as a unifying force for the Chinese groups which spoke several dialects (see Chapter 2 paragraph 43).

2. We have noted in chapter 2 paragraph 43 some features of the Chinese school system. We have also seen in chapter 3 paragraph 6 how in the aftermath of World War II there sprang up a Chinese-dominated political movement with the avowed objectives of gaining independence for Malaya and converting the country into a communist state. This movement had repercussions on the Chinese schools, and the British became quite alert to what was happening in them.

"increasing control was exercised over school instruction and those schools most blatantly advocating a Chinese ideology were closed, the usual objects of this ultimate sanction not surprisingly being those exhibiting strong communist leanings."[1]

3. In 1946, H. R. Cheeseman, the British Director of Education in Malaya, proposed a plan for educational re-organization which involved, *inter alia*,

(i) "the provision of free primary education through the mother tongue in Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English ;

(ii) the extension of English language instruction to all primary schools ;

(iii) the establishment of two types of secondary school : one in which English would be medium of instruction with the study of the mother tongue as a subject, the other in which the mother tongue would remain the medium of instruction with the study of English as a second language."[2]

The long term objective of the policy was stated to be :

"To reconstruct the education system so as to ensure the fullest educational development for every section of the community."[3]

Nation-building was completely absent from the thinking of the British both at this stage, and in 1950 when the Cheeseman policy was endorsed by the Central Advisory Committee for Education in the newly established Federation of Malaya.

The Barnes Committee, 1951

4. In 1951, the British master-minded a plan to strike a death blow to Chinese schools with their persistent communist threat. It was done under the guise of a tender concern for national unity, the like of which was not demonstrated in

any of the other colonies which Britain had in many parts of the world. With the wisdom of hindsight, the British had at last come to realise that the seeds of communism would not have been sown with such devastating effect, if Britain had not left Chinese schools in Malaya to derive their inspiration from China, and also to get their teachers and books from China. The plan was proposed not by the government itself but by a committee. There is little doubt, however, as to the identity of the mentor. The government appointed in 1951 a committee under the chairmanship of L. J. Barnes, Director of Social Training, Oxford University, "to enquire into the adequacy or otherwise of the educational facilities available for Malays."[4] The committee consisted of nine Malays and five Europeans, the exclusion of Chinese and Indians being ostensibly justified by the terms of reference. The Barnes Committee made bold to go outside its terms of reference, with no check by the government, and to address itself to the role of education in building up a common Malayan nationality :

> "Our approach is governed by the belief that the primary school should be treated avowedly and with full deliberation as an instrument for building up a common nationality on the basis of those elements in the population who regard Malaya as their home and the object of their loyalty."[5]

The committee called into question the advisability of retaining separate schools for various racial groups, teaching in their respective languages, and suggested a single-type primary school, in which children of all racial groups would be taught through the media of English and Malay, while provision would be made for teaching Chinese and Tamil as subjects.

> "In principle, we recommend the end of separate vernacular schools for the several racial communities and their replacement by a single type of primary school common to all."[6]

> "We recognize, however, that in the present-day circumstances and conditions in Malaya it may be necessary to take into consideration other factors additional to educational principles when framing that all pupils should learn Malay and English throughout the six years of their primary course and that, in addition, provision should be made for Chinese and Indian pupils to receive instruction in Kuo-Yu and Tamil respectively."[6]

Instead of the bilingual national schools at the primary level suggested by the Barnes Committee, the Central Advisory Committee recommended two types of national schools, one in which English would be the medium of instruction, and the other with Malay as the medium of instruction. Malay would be taught as a subject in the English medium school, and English would be taught as a subject in the Malay medium school. Both types of schools would teach Chinese or Tamil as a subject if requested by at least fifteen parents. Chinese and Tamil medium schools were to continue but gradually become trilingual by the introduction of English and Malay as additional languages. The Committee's recommendations, constituting in effect a modification of the Barnes recommendations and a rejection of the Fenn-Wu recommendations, formed the basis for the Education Ordinance of 1952.

The Education Ordinance of 1952.

7. The Education Ordinance of 1952 contained the following statement of educational policy :

> "The aim and purpose of the national educational policy of the Federation is to achieve a sound education of all children in the Federation using in the main for this purpose, the official languages of the Federation and bringing together pupils of all races in a national type of school with a Malayan orientation : Provided that reasonable facilities for those children whose parents or guardians so desire shall be provided for learning the Chinese language in the medium of Kuo-Yu and the Tamil language."[7]

A national school was described in the following terms, and the distinguishing features of national schools were listed :

1. "... a 'national school' is any school providing for children of all races a six-year course of free primary education with a Malayan orientation and appropriate for children between the ages of six and twelve and using in the main for this purpose the official languages of the Federation and providing facilities for instruction in Kuo-Yu and Tamil in accordance with the provisions of this section.

2. National schools shall be of two types —

   (*a*) those in which Malay is the main medium of instruction ; and

   (*b*) those in which English is the main medium of instruction.

3. At a national school in which Malay is the main medium of instruction, instruction in English shall be given to all pupils throughout the whole of the school course. In addition, instruction in Kuo-Yu and Tamil shall, subject to the provisions of sub-section (3) be available for those pupils whose parents or guardians request instruction in such languages and such instruction shall be available in all years of the school course.

4. At a national school in which English is the main medium of instruction, instruction in Malay shall be given to all pupils as and from the commencement of the third year of the school course. In addition, instruction in Kuo-Yu and Tamil shall, subject to the provisions of sub-section (5), be available for those pupils whose parents or guardians request instruction in such languages and such instruction shall be available in all the years of the school course."[4]

Apart from national schools, a category of schools called 'conforming schools' is mentioned in the Ordinance. One of

the conditions for extending financial assistance to them is that the medium of instruction is the same as in a government school. In the case of private schools, for which there is no provision for financial assistance, there is no restriction on the medium of instruction. By Section 20 of the Ordinance the government is empowered to give notice to the manager of a school, which does not conform to the requirements of a national school, to comply with such requirements within a year : and if the manager does not comply, the government is empowered to establish a national school. It is clear from the Ordinance that the British government rejected the Fenn-Wu recommendations and accepted the Central Advisory Committee's modification of the recommendations of the Barnes Committee. The Ordinance states nothing about secondary education, but the obvious inference from its recommendations for primary schools is that national secondary schools would be in either the Malay medium or the English medium. There were no Tamil medium secondary schools. Chinese medium secondary schools would not belong to the national system. The assessment of two distinguished educators of the plan envisaged in the Ordinance was that it "was bold and innovative", but weak in that it overlooked the financial aspect."[3]

8. The Ordinance ran into difficulties immediately after its enactment, for there were several hundred Chinese medium and Tamil medium primary schools which did not conform to the national type. It was easy enough to give notice to these managers asking them to conform to the requirements of a national school within a year, but in the event of failure to do so — which was a certainty as both the Chinese and the Indians were strongly opposed to the disappearance of their schools — the Government was faced with the alternative of establishing new schools, which was clearly an undertaking with prohibitive financial implications. The government's financial position according to the estimates proposed for 1954 was none too rosy as a deficit of 175 million Malaysian dollars was envisaged.

The Special Committee, 1952

9. Faced with the financial situation indicated above, the government appointed a Special Committee to recommend *inter alia*

"the priorities for the direction of educational development within the framework of the Ordinance having regard to the amount of money likely to be available for the next few years."[1] Taking into account the financial situation of the country the Committee went on to say :

> "Though we unanimously affirm our belief, first, that multi-racial schools are essential for the education of the future citizens of a united Malayan nation ; second, that there are two official languages, English and Malay and both must be taught ; and third that there must be a single system of education and a common content in the teaching in all schools, the country, with its present level of expenditure is not in a position to balance its annual budget."[2]

The economies recommended by the Committee were to the effect that a ceiling should be placed on admission to English medium schools. It was suggested that the enrolment in English primary schools should be stabilised at 7.6 per cent of the primary age group (6 + to 12 +), and that a ceiling of 34,000 be set for enrolment in the secondary English schools. The imposition of the ceiling was a decisive step in the direction of making the Malay medium school rather than the English medium school the national school of the future. Section 20 of the Ordinance (see paragraph 7) was clearly not to be implemented. The Committee made some hortatory remarks on working towards a national school system by the gradual introduction of English and Malay as subjects in Chinese medium and Tamil medium schools, and English as a subject in Malay medium schools.

The Education Policy Paper, 1954

10. The recommendations of the Special Committee mentioned above formed the basis for the Education Policy Paper approved by the Federal Legislative Council in 1954. It contained the following statement :

> "We affirm unanimously our belief in three principles, first that multi-racial schools are essential for the education of future citizens of a United Malayan Nation ; second, that there are two official languages, Malay and English, and both must be taught ; and third, that there must be a single system of education and a common content in the teaching in all schools,"[13]

and went on to reiterate what the Special Committee had stated. Educational expenditure was contained, but there were two developments of note. The first was that several Chinese and Tamil schools started teaching English and Malay as subjects, and the second was that action was initiated by the government towards spelling out a common curriculum content.

The Razak Committee, 1955.

11. An important political development in 1955 was the resounding victory in the elections to the Federal Legislative Council of the Alliance Party, consisting of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). It provided a setting for the educational problem, especially with reference to the language medium/media of instruction, to be addressed on a basis acceptable to the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians. In 1956, fifteen members of the Legislative Council, consisting of Malays, Chinese, aad Indians belonging to the Alliance Party were appointed a committee with Dato Abdul Razak, then Minister of Education, as the Chairman.

> "...to examine the present educational policy of the Federation of Malaya and to recommend any alterations or adaptations that are necessary with a view to establishing a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic, and political development as a nation having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the

country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the languages and culture of other communities living in the country."[5]

A spirit of compromise characterized the Razak Report. It declared :

> "We believe...that the ultimate objective of educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognize that progress towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual."[6]

Note the reference to Malay as the national language in a multi-racial committee report. This was possible because of the political development that non-Malays agreed to concede this status to the Malay language in return for the liberalisation of the requirements for citizenship (see chapter 3 paragraph 7). The Report conceded the use of Malay, English-Chinese, and Tamil as the media at the primary level, giving pride of place to Malay medium schools by calling them standard schools, while the others were called standard-type schools. At the secondary level, the medium could be English Chinese or Malay, but the government would spend its energies on the promotion of Malay as the medium of instruction with English as an additional language. Malay and English would be compulsory subjects in all schools, the former because it is the national language, the latter because of its utilitarian value. Attention to the study of Malay was further ensured by by requiring that a knowledge of Malay was necessary for admission to all secondary schools supported partly or wholly from government funds, and also for entry into government service. The Report endorsed the recommendation in the Education Policy Paper of 1954 for a common content

> "Once all schools are working to a common content syllabus, irrespective of the language medium of instruction, we consider the country will have taken the most important step towards establishing a national system of

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[illegible] Education Ordinance, 1957.

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> "The educational policy [illegible] a national system of education [illegible] as a whole which will [illegible] their cultural, social, economic [illegible] as a nation, while the [illegible] language the national language [illegible] preserving and sustaining [illegible] culture of peoples other [illegible] country."[20]

13. We have seen in this chapter how [illegible] munist threat to British Malaya [illegible] spread of which Chinese schools [illegible] the British through the mouth [illegible] round the idea that the primary [illegible] the Malay languages as media [illegible] and the Tamil media, could be [illegible] to meet [illegible] nationality. With [illegible] could use either the English or [illegible] recommendation was embodied in [illegible] which [illegible] as it was

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1956, Kuala Lumpur. 1956.

(20) Federation of Malaya. *Edu*
Lumpur, 1957, Sec. 3.

PART

POST - INDEPENDENCE

CHAPTER 5

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMBALANCES AMONG RACIAL GROUPS, CIRCA 1969

1. In the view of the government of Malaysia, the principal barrier to national unity in the country is the sense of frustration among the Malays as a result of their disadvantaged position *vis-a-vis* the other racial groups, stemming from the political strategies, and the economic and educational policies pursued by the British from the 1870s, when they first secured a firm foothold in Malaya. The Chinese and Indian attitudes of restricting to their respective racial groups the benefits accruing from their advantaged position are regarded as the second factor standing in the way of national unity.

2. The majority of the Malay population live in rural areas with limited access to education and modern sector employment, but in regard to the latter it has to be emphasized that even urban residence with access to wage employment does not imply success in obtaining such employment (see paragraph 5). The following table shows the distribution of the population of Peninsular Malaysia by race and urban-rural residence for 1957 and 1970.

TABLE 1

Population of *Peninsular Malaysia* by race and urban-rural residence, 1957 and 1970 (Percentages)

	1957		1970	
Race	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Urban*	*Rural*
Malays	11.2	88.2	14.8	85.2
Chinese	44.7	55.3	47.6	52.4
Indians	30.7	69.3	34.6	65.4

Source: Malaysia. *General Report. Population Census of Malaysia*, 1970. Vol. 1. Kuala Lumpur, 1972. Table 3.19.

The rural sector is characterized by a dual economy. One is a high profit yielding plantation sector economy connected largely with rubber and palm oil, and also a flourishing mining sector – tin. Those who derive substantial benefit from it consist of a large number of foreign investors and a small number of Malaysians belonging to the capitalist ranks. The rural Malays are not participants in this economy, except marginally as the labour ranks. The second economy of the rural areas is based on subsistence farming, fishing, and small [illegible] this economy by the majority of the [illegible]

Social disadvantage :

3. Infant mortality rates and life expectancy rates are regarded as meaningful indicators of the social condition of a people. Tables 2 and 3 [illegible] that in respect of both these indicators the Malays are [illegible] in comparison with the Chinese but slightly better off *vis-a-vis* the Indians.

TABLE 2

Peninsular Malaysia : Infant mortality rates by race and sex, 1969

	Males	*Females*
Malays	54.4	43.0
Chinese	34.9	27.1
Indians	58.7	46.9

(*Source* : Fernandez, Dorothy Z. *et al. The population of Malaysia.* Paris, 1975. Table 2.3)

TABLE 3

Peninsular Malaysia : Life expectancy by race and sex, 1969 [71]

	Males	*Females*
Malays	63.7	65.5
Chinese	65.1	73.4
Indians	60.7	63.2

(*Source* : Fernandez, Dorothy Z. *et al. The Population of Malaysia.* Paris, 1975. Table 2.5.)

Educational disadvantage :

4. Educational disadvantage is largely a function of rural residence and the policies pursued by the British. Until the latter half of the 1950's, the meagre facilities for education that existed in rural areas did not extend beyond a primary education through Malay. This was in contrast to the urban areas where facilities, though not very widespread, existed for education at the primary and secondary levels through the English medium, for education

at the primary level in Tamil and Malay, and at both primary and secondary levels in Chinese. The situation was compounded by the fact that the Chinese and the Indians were the majority in the urban population, while the Malays were the minority in the rural population. Since a knowledge of English is one of the key factors determining social mobility, it is of interest to examine data showing the percentage of each racial group literate in English. Table 4 shows the percentage of each race literate in English for the population aged 10 years and over for 1957 and 1970.

TABLE 4

Peninsular Malaysia : Percentage of each racial group, aged 10 and over, literate in English, 1957 and 1970.

	1957	1970
Malays	4.6	10.8
Chinese	11.2	21.8
Indians	16.4	30.0
Others	58.1	52.6

(*Source :* Malaysia, *General Report, Population Census of Malaysia* 1970 Vol. 1, Kuala Lumpur, 1977, Table 4.8).

Not only were the Chinese and the Indians ahead of the Malays in 1957, but they also increased their lead during the period 1957 to 1970. The following table gives the percentage of the population over 17 years of age of each race with the educational qualification of a School Certificate and above.

TABLE 5

Peninsular Malaysia : Percentage of the population, 17 years and above, of each race with School Certificate and above

Malays	4.2
Chinese	7.3
Indians	8.0
Others	31.0

(*Source* : Malaysia, *General Report, Population Census of Malaysia*, 1970. Vol. 1. Kuala Lumpur, 1977, Table 4.21.)

Table 5 also shows the disadvantaged position of the Malays in education. Differential opportunities for education at the primary and the secondary level for the various groups have their repercussions at the tertiary level as seen from Table 6.

TABLE 6

University of Malaya. Percentage distribution of students in courses of study by ethnic groups, 1965/66.

Course	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians and Ceylonese*	*Others*	*Total*
Agriculture	22.1	66.2	10.4	1.3	100.0
Arts	40.5	41.4	15.9	2.2	100.0
Engineering	1.1	89.0	9.2	0.7	100.0
Science	4.9	83.1	10.6	1.4	100.0
Medicine	12.4	78.5	8.6	0.5	100.0
Education	18.0	52.7	26.0	3.3	100.0
Total	25.4	58.9	13.9	1.8	100.0

(*Source*: Hayden, Howard Jean. *Higher education and development in Southeast Asia*. Volume 2. Paris. 1967. Extracted from tables 24 and 25.)

This table shows that nearly three-fifths of the university enrolment consisted of Chinese students, while the Malays constituted only a quarter. When individual faculties are considered, the Chinese predominance is seen in all the faculties except Arts in which the percentages of the Chinese and the Malay enrolments approximate each other. The imbalance in favour of the Chinese in the Faculty of Agriculture may at first sight seem surprising, considering that the Malay population of the country is predominantly rural. The real reason is not that the Malays are not interested but that access to the knowledge of the basic sciences required for admission is available only to the urban population with its Chinese predominance.

Imbalances in employment :

5. The following table shows the racial composition of the labour force. It provides clear evidence of the dominant position of the Chinese in construction, commerce, mining and quarrying, and in manufacturing.

TABLE 7

Peninsular Malaysia : Racial Composition of Labour Force, 1970.

Sector	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Agriculture	67.0	21.0	11.7	0.8	100.0
Mining and quarrying	29.0	67.1	3.3	0.6	100.0
Manufacturing	29.6	65.3	5.3	0.4	100.0
Construction	31.6	62.6	5.4	0.4	100.0

Sector	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indian*	*Others*	*Total*
Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services	48.1	18.2	32.2	1.5	100.0
Commerce	23.4	65.5	10.6	0.5	100.0
Trade	42.4	39.9	17.0	0.7	100.0
Services	47.3	30.7	14.0	7.9	100.0
Other industries	51.1	38.3	10.1	0.5	100.0

Source : Malaysia. *General Report. Population Census of Malaysia, 1970* Vol. 1. Kuala Lumpur, 1977. Table 7.12 (a).

The following table, derived on the basis of a different scheme of classification, demonstrates the superior position occupied by the Chinese in administrative, managerial, professional, and technical occupations.

TABLE 8.

Peninsular Malaysia : Racial composition of main occupational groups, 1970

Occupation	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Professional, administrative and managerial, technical	34.5	52.0	10.1	3.4	100.0
Clerical	35.7	48.1	14.8	1.4	100.0
Sales	22.8	66.4	10.5	0.4	100.0
Services	45.8	39.1	13.0	2.2	100.0
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen, and hunters	68.9	21.0	9.3	0.8	100.0

Occupation	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers	34.0	54.9	10.7	0.3	100.0

(*Source*: Malaysia, *General Report, Population Census of Malaysia*, 1970, Vol. 1. Kuala Lumpur, 1977. Adapted from Table 7.15*a*).

It is relevant to note that from the point of view of undertaking entrepreneurial activities and engaging in manufacturing and commerce, the arrangements made by the British to give a good English education to the sons of the Malay aristocracy and recruit them to the Malayan Administrative Service proved to be an obstacle to the diversification of the occupational interests of educated Malays. Instead of engaging in the productive and dynamic sectors of the economy, they spent their energy and skills in low level bureaucratic positions assisting the British to keep the colonial government machinery running. In the case of the educated Chinese and the Indians, their relative lack of access to bureaucratic positions made them venture into industry and commerce with conspicuous success, so much so that their position in the control of the economy was only second to that of foreigners. In the case of subordinate levels of white collar employment such as the clerical grades, the employees consisted of a preponderant percentage of Chinese and Indians with some secondary education in English, a privilege which very few Malays enjoyed. With the striking exception of the maintenance oriented Malayan Home and Foreign Service, the Malays did not have a monopoly of the plums of office, and the Chinese and the Indians enjoyed more than their fair share. Table 9 shows the percentage distribution by racial groups of the professional services (Division I) in 1968.

TABLE 9

Peninsular Malaysia : Percentage distribution of racial groups in the professional services (Division I), 1968.

Services	*Racial groups*				
	Malays	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Education	32.2	40.3	24.0	3.5	100.0
Agriculture	32.6	51.7	15.7		100.0
Drainage and Irrigation	8.6	74.2	17.2	—	100.0
Public works	16.4	63.8	18.7	1.1	100.0
Telecommunications	17.9	44.3	31.1	6.7	100.0
Medical	10.1	40.7	44.6	4.6	100.0
Statistics	—	64.5	35.5	—	100.0
Forestry	53.7	36.6	9.7	—	100.0
Veterinary	34.4	21.9	43.7		100.0
Geology	4.7	66.7	28.6		100.0

(*Source :* Milton, Esman, J. *Administration and development in Malaysia.* Ithaca, 1972. Table 5.)

It will be noted that the professional services were predominantly non-Malay, with 90 per cent in Medicine, 84 per cent in public works (engineering), 100 per cent in statistics, 67 per cent in agriculture, 68 per cent in education — to list a few. Even in the non-professional services, the Chinese were over-represented in the Income Tax, Labour and Immigration departments, and the Indians also in certain departments as the following table shows:

TABLE 19

Peninsular Malaysia : Percentage Distribution of racial groups in the non-professional services : Division 11, 1968

Services	*Malays*	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Malayan Home and Foreign Service	86.7	6.4	6.4	0.5	100.0
Police	43.2	30.2	21.7	4.3	100.0
Customs	63.4	32.7	4.9	-	100.0
Registration	50.8	30.8	38.4	-	100.0
Prisons	71.4	7.1	7.1	13.4	100.0
Immigration	58.3	41.7		8.3	100.0
Income tax	5.7	53.5	23.9	16.9	100.0
Labour	15.7	52.9	31.4		100.0
Co-operatives	76.8	7.7	15.5		100.0

(*Source*) Esman, Milton J. *Administration and Development in Malaysia*. Ithaca, 1972. Table 6.1

In regard to employment in the private sector, the following observation by Roff is relevant :

> "European concerns tended to prefer what were generally regarded as the more 'civilized' and reliable Chinese to Indians, and domestic servants were overwhelmingly Malay or Chinese. Many firms found their own people exclusively."[1]

The economic dominance of the Chinese in the ownership of wealth is discussed in paragraph 7, but is implicit in Roff's statement. The point of view of employment may be briefly considered here. The following is his assessment of the situation :

"The control of Chinese over the job market is great. Between 80 and 90 per cent of all private employers in Malaysia are Chinese, and employees are usually of the same dialect affiliation as their employers."[2]

Thus the opportunities of employment for Malays in urban private sector enterprises, most of which are Chinese owned, are very limited.

Imbalances in income :

9. The following table shows the mean household income by racial groups, and urban-rural residence in 1970.

TABLE 11

Peninsular Malaysia : Mean household income by racial groups and urban-rural residence in 1970 (Malaysian dollars)

Racial group	*Urban households*	*Rural households*	*Total*
Malay	328.1	154.5	178.7
Chinese	464.3	332.6	387.4
Indian	441.5	237.2	310.4

(*Source :* Malaysia, *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan* 1971—1975, Kuala Lumpur, 1973, Table 1.2.).

The advantaged position of the Chinese *vis-a-vis* the Malays may be seen from this table. The average income of *rural* Chinese households was greater than the average income of *urban* Malay households. When the racial composition of the very rich, namely those households earning over 3000 Malaysian dollars a month is considered, 52.0 per cent of all such households were Chinese, 17.1 per cent Indian, and 12.4 per cent Malay.[3] In regard to those at the other end of the economic scale, namely poor households defining them as households with an income of less than 100 Malaysian dollars a month, the racial distribution was as follows :

TABLE 12

Peninsular Malaysia : Ethnic and urban-rural distribution of households with a monthly income of less than M $ 100 (percentages)

Racial group	*Urban households*	*Rural households*	*Total*
Malay	4.4	80.1	84.5
Chinese	4.3	5.3	9.6
Indian	1.2	3.7	4.9
Other	0.1	0.9	1.0
Total	10.0	90.0	100.0

(*Source* : Malaysia. *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan, 1971—1975*. Kuala Lumpur, 1973. Table 1.2.1

It is clear from this table that Malay poverty is closely related to rural residence. Among the urban poor, the percentage difference between Malays and Chinese is insignificant.

Imbalances in the ownership of wealth :

7. The imbalance in the ownership of assets may be seen from tables 13 and 14. Table 13 shows the percentage distribution by each racial group of

   (*a*) the ownership of acreage under cultivation with rubber oil palm, coconut, and tea ; and

   (*b*) the ownership of fixed assets in manufacturing, construction, and mining.

Table 14 shows the percentage distribution by racial groups of the ownership of share capital in limited liability companies.

TABLE 13

Peninsular Malaysia : Ownership of assets by race in modern agriculture and industry, 1970.

	Modern agriculture		*Industry*	
	Corporate sector %	*Non-corporate sector* %	*Corporate sector* %	*Non-corporate sector* %
Malaysians	29.2	94.1	42.8	97.6
Malay	0.3	47.1	0.9	2.3
Chinese	25.9	32.8	26.2	92.2
Indian	0.3	10.1	0.1	2.3
Other	2.7	1.8	14.3	0.8
Government	-	2.3	1.3	—
Non-Malaysians	70.8	5.9	57.2	2.4
Total:	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(*Source* : Malaysia. *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan, 1971—1975*. Kuala Lumpur, 1973. Table 1.4.1).

TABLE 14

Peninsular Malaysia : Ownership of share capital of limited companies by race and sector, 1970.

	Malay %	*Chinese* %	*Indian* %	*Foreign* %
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0.9	22.4	0.1	75.3
Mining and quarrying	0.7	16.8	0.4	72.4
Manufacturing	2.5	22.0	0.7	59.6

	Malay %	*Chinese* %	*Indian* %	*Foreign* %
Construction	2.2	52.8	0.8	24.1
Transport and communications	13.3	43.4	2.3	12.0
Commerce	0.8	30.4	0.7	63.5
Banking and insurance	3.3	24.3	0.6	52.2
Others	2.3	37.8	2.3	31.4
Total :	1.9	22.5	1.0	60.7

(*Source* : Malaysia. *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan*, 1971 – 1975. Kuala Lumpur, 1973. Table 4.7.1.

The tables show quite clearly the position of dominance occupied by foreign interests in the ownership and consequent control of the Malaysian economy. Foreign interests owned 60.7 per cent of the share capital, the Chinese came next with 22.5 per cent, while the Malays and the Indians had insignificant holdings of 1.9 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively. In the agriculture sector, where the foreign dominance is greatest, their ownership was very largely in the rubber plantations. In mining also the foreign holding was high. It was least in transport and communications. Chinese participation was highest in construction, then in transport, and next in commerce. Malay participation was insignificant, except in transport, while the Indian participation was not significant in any sector.

References

1. Roff, William R. *The origins of Malay nationalism*. Kuala Lumpur, 1967. *p.* 120.

2. Vreeland, Nena, *et al. Area handbook for Malaysia*. Washington, D. C. 1977. *p.* 129.

3. Malaysia. *Mid-Term Review of the Second Malaysia Plan*, 1971—1975. Kuala Lumpur, 1973. Table 1.2.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS 1957 — 1969

1. As noted in Chapter 3, the independent Federation of Malaya came into being on 31st August 1957. Singapore was not included in the Federation nor was it given independent status. In a message to the Federation on Independence Day, Lim Yew Hock, Chief Minister of Singapore, stated as follows :

> "...it is in the prime interest of both peoples to merge into a single political unit...we of Singapore look forward to that day when your strength will be added to our strength and our separation will be ended."[1]

The response of the Federation was not enthusiastic. There was little doubt about the reason for this. The Malays constituted 50.1 per cent of the population of the Federation and the Chinese 36.9 per cent ; the Chinese constituted 75.3 per cent of the population of Singapore, and the Malays 13.9 per cent. If the two were merged, the racial composition would have become 44.2 per cent Chinese, and 43.1 per cent Malay.

2. When Lee Kuan Yew became the Chief Minister of Singapore, he, too, pressed for union. Meanwhile, in 1959 under a new constitution, Singapore became 'self-governing' under British auspices, the British Governor becoming High Commissioner, with a Malay as the ceremonial Head of State. This was regarded as a transitional stage in the constitutional development of Singapore, pending independence in 1963. The official language was declared to be Malay, a gesture made by the predominantly Chinese population of Singapore to emphasize that the fortunes

of Malaya and Singapore were bound together. The Prime Minister of the Federation, Tengku Abdul Rahman, had his sights on a union which included not only Singapore, but Sarawak, North Borneo, and Brunei also. The real reason was that in terms of the strength of the racial groups such a union would give the Malays a more favourable racial balance than if Singapore alone were included. In a speech at Singapore on 26th May, 1961 he declared :

> "Malaya today as a nation realizes that she cannot stand alone and in isolation. Outside of international politics, the national one must be broad based. Sooner or later she should have an understanding with Britain and the peoples of the territories of Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak."[2]

North Borneo and Sarawak were under the British, who decided to ascertain the views of the people of the two countries. This enquiry took some time but the answer was in the affirmative. The Sultan of Brunei agreed to join the Federation, but difficulties regarding the disposal of its oil revenues delayed agreement. These were not the only problems, but to cut a long story short the Federation of Malaysia was proclaimed on 16th September 1963, consisting of the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah (Sabah being the new name for North Borneo).

3. We now look back at a development in the Federation of Malaya that later extended to Malaysia. It was about racial rights. Citizenship, with the right of participation in economic activities having been won, in the Federation of Malaya the Chinese on an intensive scale and the Indians on a minor scale began an agitation for an amendment to the provisions regarding the special rights of Malays and the status of the Malay language embodied in the Constitution of the Federation. In other words, the Chinese and the Indians tried to opt out of the deal made earlier (see chapter 3 paragraph 7). Much heat was generated on this account in 1959, shortly before the general elections. It is a well-documented fact regarding political processes in most countries that election platforms provide unrivalled opportunities

for raising sensitive issues and trying to win votes, and Malaya was no exception in this regard. The Alliance Party, which was a coalition of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) came very near dissolution on this issue. The crisis was, however, resolved, the Chinese being apparently won over by some liberality in the allocation of parliamentary seats to be contested by the M.C.A. Nevertheless, an amendment in 1962 to the Constitution provides for rural weightage in the determination of electoral districts. As the majority of the rural population is Malay, this provision ensures a high representation of Malays in the Parliament. Even after the Federation of Malaysia was formed in 1963, the issue of special privileges for Malays and the status of Malay as the official language was revived time and again. Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore, entered the fray and launched a vigorous compaign about the year 1964 for the removal of Malay privileges and for the Chinese language to be accorded equal status with Malay. The conflict that developed with the Malay leadership led to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965.

4. As the year 1967, when the Parliament had to decide in terms of Article 152 of the Constitution whether the official status accorded to English should be continued or abolished approached, the situation began hotting up again. Malay nationalists agitated for the status accorded to English to be abolished, the Chinese agitated to get the Chinese language also accorded official status, while a certain body of opinion stood for retaining English for a further period of time. Malay opinion prevailed with the Alliance Party, consisting at that time of the Malayan Indian Congress as well, and the National Language Act of 1967 made Malay the sole national language for exclusive use in all official communications and documents, subject to certain very limited exceptions. A transitional period was also provided during which the continued use of English was permitted for certain official purposes until 1973.

5. Communally inspired politicking continued to persist, with the passions of the masses being roused on both sides on the eve of

the elections of May 1969. However, it was a few days after the elections, on 13th May 1969, that racial passions reached a climax when Kuala Lumpur experienced racial rioting on an unprecedented scale. Before the police and the army succeeded in quelling the riots, death and arson took a heavy toll. An emergency was declared, parliamentary rule was suspended and a National Operations Council, multi-racial in composition and headed by the Prime Minister, Tengku Abdul Rahman, took over the reins of government. An account of significant developments since then is given in Chapter 8.

References

1. Cited in Hayden, Howard (ed.), *Higher education and development in South-east Asia*. Vol. 2. Paris, 1967, p. 279.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 280.

CHAPTER 7

THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

1. It was in the post-independence period that the first efforts were taken to promote the use of Malay in secondary education as no school at all taught Malay above the elementary level. In order to make provision for study through the medium of Malay at the secondary level, 135 Malay medium classes were attached to existing English medium secondary schools between 1957 and 1960. A number of Malay medium secondary schools were also established. The time to be devoted to the study of the national language in both primary and secondary schools that receive government assistance – as indeed the time for the other subjects of the curriculum — was specified in the *Malayan Federal Gazette* of 14th May, 1959.

The Rahman Talib Committee

2. In February 1960, a multi-racial committee was appointed with Enche Abdul Rahman bin Haji Talib, Minister of Education, as the Chairman :

> "To review the Education Policy set out in the Federal Legislative Council Paper No. 21 of 1956 (the Report of the Education Committee, 1956) which was approved in principle by resolution of the Federal Legislative Council on the 16th of May, 1956, and in particular its implementation so far and for the future....."

While reviewing developments in the past, it had to take off where the Razak Committee left. The Rahman Talib Committee (see chapter 4 paragraph 10) reiterated the belief expressed in the Razak Report that :

> "an education policy 'acceptable to the people as a whole' must provide for at least two things : it must satisfy the legitimate aspirations of each of the major cultural groups who have made their home in Malaya and it must offer the prospect of a place in a school for every child born in this country."[2]

It pointed out that the first requirement was met by providing primary education in the language of the family, but that it would :

> "be incompatible with an educational policy designed to create national consciousness and having the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country to extend and to perpetuate a language and racial differential throughout the publicly-financed educational system."[3]

3. It was the view of the Rahman Talib Committee that education at secondary level paid for from public funds should be conducted mainly in the medium of the two official languages (viz. English and Malay) with the intention of ultimately using the national language as the main medium of instruction, except that other languages and literatures may be taught and learnt in in their own media. Chinese medium secondary schools could qualify for financial assistance by switching over to English or Malay as the medium of instruction. There was no need to mention Tamil schools as there was not a single Tamil medium secondary school. The Committee recommended that Malay medium schools which were, along with English medium schools, hitherto called standard schools should be called national schools, and that other fully assisted schools should be called national type schools. In fully assisted secondary schools, a "Remove" Form should be provided for pupils who have received their primary education in a language other than that of the secondary school. In other words, the Remove Form in a Malay medium secondary school would be intended for students who have received their primary education in English, Chinese

or Tamil, while the Remove Form in an English medium secondary school would be intended for students who have received their primary education in Malay, Chinese, or Tamil. The Remove Form would concentrate on developing competence in Malay or English as the case may be. In view of the fact that the pupils concerned would have studied these languages for 6 years and 4 years respectively in their primary schools, it was expected that after one year in the Remove Form they would be able to join Form One in the Secondary school and eventually sit the Lower Certificate of Education in the Malay or the English medium as the case may be after three years of study. The Committee noted that under section 37 of the Education Ordinance of 1957 the Minister was empowered to continue partial assistance for a limited period of time to secondary schools which did not conform to the national type, and that 41 schools were receiving such assistance. It was recommended that the assistance should cease by the end of 1961 and that the schools concerned should take steps either to qualify for full assistance by complying with the necessary requirements or become independent. Independent schools themselves had to conform to certain requirements including *inter alia* the observance of common syllabuses, time-tables, and courses of study. The recommendation of the Razak Committee that it was essential to establish a common syllabus for all schools was endorsed by the Rahman Talib Committee :

> "We agree with the 1956 Report that this is a crucial feature of the education system and that all schools whether assisted, partially assisted or independent must, unless specifically exempted under statutory authority... observe syllabuses and time tables as approved by the Minister."

4. The Rahman Talib Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Razak Committee that free primary education should be implemented by 1962. As education in all Malay medium and most Tamil medium schools had all along been free, the effect of this recommendation was to make education in the English medium and Chinese medium schools free. The Committee further suggested that primary education should be compulsory

but even as of 1981 this recommendation has not been implemented.

5. Examinations : The Rahman Talib Committee recommended that the Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination should be the selective examination for secondary schools of all media, and that the examination itself should be set in all four language media. Admission to Chinese secondary schools had been based on the Chinese Secondary Schools Promotion Examination, and it was recommended that this examination be discontinued as from 1961, admission being thereafter based on performance in the Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination. The Committee recommended that the Ministry should set a target date after which a pass in Malay would be compulsory. According to the Committee, the best 30 per cent of the pupils at the Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination should be admitted to academic secondary schools, and the remaining 70 per cent should be admitted to three-year post-primary schools offering courses with a vocational bias, and not leading to a public examination. It was suggested to the Committee that the percentage should be applied separately to each of the four language media in which the examination could be taken. The Committee did not agree.

> "We do not support this suggestion. It would infringe the principle of equality of opportunity which should hold in a national system."

The Committee recommended that the Junior Middle III Examination and the Chinese Secondary Schools Leaving Certificate Examination which had been conducted by the Ministry of Education through the Chinese medium for the benefit of Chinese schools should be discontinued with effect from 1962. If Chinese secondary schools were interested, they could send up candidates for the Lower Certificate of Education Examination, the Malayan Certificate of Education Examination, and the Overseas Certificate of Education Examination but, of course, they were not available in the Chinese medium. The Lower

Certificate of Education Examination and the Malayan Certificate of Education Examination introduced in 1957 to be taken at the end of the third and the fifth years of secondary education were at first available in English only. As from 1960, the Lower Certificate of Education Examination was available in Malay also. In regard to both the Lower Certificate of Education and the Malayan Certificate of Education Examinations, the Committee endorsed the view of the Razak Committee that as they are "official, national, public examinations...the linchpins in our national system of secondary education," they should be held only in the official languages.[2] In this connection, the committee reiterated that in its view

> "the only way to reconcile the existing basic objectives of education policy which are to create a national consciousness while at the same time preserving and sustaining the various cultures of the country, is to conduct education at primary level in the languages of the country and thereafter to reduce the language and racial differentials in our educational system. For the sake of national unity, the objective must be to eliminate communal secondary schools from the national system of assisted schools and to ensure that pupils of all races should attend both the National and National-type secondary schools. An essential requirement of this policy is that public examinations at secondary level should be conducted only in the country's official languages."[3]

The Committee noted with approval that as from 1960 the Lower Certificate of Education Examination would be conducted in Malay, in addition to English. As a natural extension, it was recommended that the Malayan Certificate of Education Examination which was in English should be conducted in Malay also as from 1962. The Overseas Certificate of Education Examination would, however, continue in English as before.

Other recommendations :

6. (*a*) The Committee noted that as from 1960 every teacher admitted to a training college or training centre for primary

teachers is required to take Malay as a second language when it is not offered as the main language. The Committee went on to recommend that the Minister should set a target date for making a qualification in the national language at the appropriate level compulsory for entrants to all teacher training schemes. It was also recommended that until the target date is reached, preference in selecting entrants to teacher training sessions should be given to candidates who have a qualification in the national language at an appropriate level.

(*b*) While giving pride of place to the national languages, the Committee emphasized that English should be taught in all classes from the primary first year upwards:

> "English holds a dominating position in international councils and commerce, in the textbooks and literature of the world. A command of it is one of our national assets."[6]

The Education Act, 1961

7. Most of the recommendations of the Rahman Talib Committee were accepted by the government and incorporated in the Education Act, 1961. According to this Act,

> "the educational policy of the Federation...is to establish a national system of education which will satisfy the needs of the nation and promote its cultural, social, economic, and political development ... and for the progressive development of an educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction."[7]

Under the Act, the Minister has the power to issue directions in relation to all matters which affect education policy; also the power to make bye-laws in respect of a number of matters including language media and public examinations.

Extension of free education

8. Primary education through the Malay and the Tamil media had been free for several decades. As from 1962, free education was extended to Chinese medium and English medium schools. As most English schools were in urban centres, the Chinese benefited more than the Malays, for whose benefit the extension was really intended. Of course, the Malays in urban areas derived some benefit, if they succeeded in getting their children admitted to English primary schools, which was by no means easy, as the privileged of all racial groups were generally the victors in the race for admission. As and when English primary schools — very few in number — were established in rural areas, free education proved to be a boon to the Malays in such areas.

Abolition of the Malayan Secondary School Entrance Examination

9. An important development in 1965 was the abolition of the Malayan Secondary School Entrance Examination, which had become since 1957 the basis for the selection of students for secondary education on completion of primary standard six. With this step, subject to the availability of school places, all children beginning school were assured of a nine year education (ten years in the case of those who had to spend a year in the Remove Form — see paragraph 31) of a comprehensive type without the hurdle of an examination that channelled them as indicated in paragraph 5. The major beneficiaries were students from Malay medium primary schools, since under the examination system that prevailed earlier, they had the lowest percentage qualifying for admission to academic secondary schools.

Steps towards the wider use of Malay

10. With a view to the eventual use of the Malay language as the medium of instruction at the university level, the University of Malaya was asked to consider the feasibility of using the Malay language in university courses.

11. Reference has to be made to the role that the Language and Literature Agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) has played in promoting the use of the national language for educational and other purposes. It was established in 1956 with the following objectives :

(i) to develop and enrich the national language ;

(ii) to print or publish or assist the printing or publication of books, magazines, pamphlets and other forms of literature in the national language as well as in other languages ;

(iii) to standardize the spelling and pronunciation, and to coin appropriate terminologies in the national language ; and

(iv) to compile and publish a national language dictionary.

It has a distinguished record of work, and is the biggest organization in Malaysia for publishing books in the national language.

12. In order to increase the knowledge of Malay in the non-Malay population as well as its use among Malays and other races for post-primary education, a Further Education Scheme was introduced in 1958. Students could enrol for individual courses which included the national language, or for full courses leading to the Lower Certificate of Education, Federation of Malaya Certificate of Education, and Higher School Certificate examinations. No fee was payable for the national language classes.

Rejection of a proposal to establish a Chinese University

13. During 1968 and 1969, the government rejected a proposal made by a group of Chinese leaders to establish a Merdeka University with Chinese as the medium of instruction on the ground that it would encourage disharmony among the races.

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Notes and References

1. Federation of Malaya. *Report of the Constitutional Commission* 1960. Kuala Lumpur.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
3. *Loc. cit.*
4. Federation of Malaya. *op. cit.*
5. *Loc. cit.*
6. Federation of Malaya. *op. cit.*
7. *Loc. cit.*
8. Federation of Malaya. *op. cit.*
9. Federation of Malaya. *The Report*. Kuala Lumpur. 1961.
10. Merdeka means Independence.

PART III

MALAYSIA, 1970 - 1980

CHAPTER 8

POLITICAL STRATEGIES FOR NATION-BUILDING

1. Reference has been made in chapter 6 paragraph 5 to the outbreak of rioting between the Malays and the Chinese on 13 May 1969. The immediate response of the government was to take action to prevent the violence from spreading, and it

> "included the use of police and armed forces, arrests, imposition of curfew, control of radio and television, censorship of the press and bans on party journals and electoral campaigning."[1]

There was, however, a further outbreak of violence again on 28 June, but it was on a very small scale and was quite easily contained.

2. The immediate political sequel to the riots was that in terms of an Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance that was promulgated, the authority of the Federation, normally exercised by the Cabinet, was vested in a Director of Operations (the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Razak), who was given wide executive and legislative powers to be exercised with the concurrence of the Prime Minister (Tunku Abdul Rahman) and a National Operations Council (NOC) appointed by himself. The NOC included a Chinese and an Indian. The multi-racial Cabinet that existed was not disbanded and continued to meet, though strictly bereft of power. However, the fact that Tun Razak sat on both ensured that there was close co-ordination between the NOC and the Cabinet. There is no record of any conflict having arisen between the two.

3. Two trends of thought emerged regarding the causes underlying the rioting. One attributed the racial tension to the questioning of the provisions of the Constitution on the part of some Chinese who alleged discrimination against them, and on the part of some Malays who argued that the Constitution did not go far enough to protect them, and that the government was giving in too much to Chinese demands. As the NOC stated in one of its documents

> "The entrenched provisions in the Constitution are the result of agreement between all communities in this country. They are the product of consultation and compromise. They represent binding agreements between the various races in the country and are the underpinnings on which the constitutional structure, such as fundamental liberties, the machinery of government, and a score of other detailed provisions are built. If these entrenched provisions are in any way eroded or weakened, the entire constitutional structure is endangered and with it the existence of the nation itself. It was the failure to understand and the irresponsible and cavalier treatment of these entrenched provisions that constituted one of the primary causes of the disturbance on May 13, 1969."[2]

The second trend of thought regarding the causes of the rioting attributed the racial tension to the fact that the economic position of the Malays had shown no signs of improvement as meaningful action had not been taken to implement Article 153 of the Constitution. There was

> "a growing sense of fear and insecurity among the Malays, due to the disparity existing between themselves and the non-Malays, particularly in the fields of education and economics."[3]

4. The diagnosis indicated the two directions in which the government should move. Firstly, the public discussion of sensitive issues and playing up of communal feelings had to be prohibited forthwith. Secondly, the economic position of the Malays had to be expeditiously improved by programmes specially undertaken for the purpose.

5. The Sedition Act of 1948 was amended by the Emergency (Essential Powers) Ordinance No. 45 of 1970. According to it, the questioning of Part III of the Constitution dealing with citizenship, Article 152 dealing with the national language, Article 153 dealing with the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of the other communities, and Article 181 dealing with the sovereignty of the rulers was made a seditious tendency punishable without the need to prove intent. An act, speech, words, publication or other thing, was deemed to be seditious if it has a tendency

> "(i) to persuade the subjects of any Ruler or the inhabitants of any territory governed by the Government to attempt to procure by lawful means the alteration of any matter in the territory of the Ruler or governed by the such Government as by law established : or
>
> (ii) to point out, with a view to their removal, any matters producing, or having a tendency to produce feelings of ill-will and enmity between different races or classes of the population of Malaysia."[2]

While the principles relating to citizenship, the national language, the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of other communities, and the sovereignty of the Rulers could not be questioned, it was not seditious to point out any defect in the manner of implementation. This was secured by a provision which stated that an act would not be deemed seditious if it sought :

> "(*a*) to show that any Ruler has been misled or mistaken in any of his measures :
>
> (*b*) to point out errors or defects in any Government or Constitution as by law established or in legislation or in the administration of justice with a view to the remedying of the errors or defects, if the act, speech, words, publication or other thing has not otherwise in fact a seditious tendency."[3]

The Constitution (Amendment) Act which incorporated in the Constitution the above mentioned provisions, while also extending their applicability and introducing certain other changes are dealt with in paragraph 10 below.

6. It may be noted that it was decided in 1971 by the King in terms of Article 153 of the Constitution that eighty per cent of the posts in the first division of the Civil Service should be reserved for Malays. Other preferential ratios were decided for the judicial service, the customs service, and the police force. Seventy five per cent of all university scholarships were also reserved for Malays.

7. The NOC created two new institutions, both of which played key roles in helping the country to get over the trauma of the riots. One was the National Consultative Council (NCC) which was assigned the duty of

> "establishing positive and practical guidelines for inter-racial co-operation and social integration for the growth of a Malayan national identity."[6]

It was multi-racial in composition. Its meetings were, however, to be held in secret and the views expressed at them were not to be articulated outside. The intention was that the NCC should arrive at a consensus based on frank discussion. As Tun Razak stated on a later occasion, the NCC was expected

> "to deliberate coolly and in closed session matters of national importance such as racial issues."[7]

8. The second institution set up by the NOC was the Department of National Unity (DNU) intended to assist the government in "galvanizing the country and guiding it towards national unity."[8] One of its tasks was to draft a national ideology. The statement drawn up by the DNU was discussed in the NCC, later approved with minor changes by the NOC and proclaimed by the King on 31 August 1970. It is known as the *Rukunegara*, and it reads as follows :

RUKUNEGARA

Our Nation Malaysia, being dedicated :

- to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples;
- to maintaining a democratic way of life ;
- to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared ;
- ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions ;
- building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology ;

We, her people, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles.

*Belief in God
*Loyalty to King and Country
*Upholding the Constitution
*Rule of Law
Good Behaviour and Morality..

While most of the *Rukunegara* is phrased in general terms, there is a specificity about a few of the principles.

> "The third principle, Upholding the Constitution, includes upholding its provisions concerning the National Language, the special position of the Malays and other natives, the legitimate interests of the other communities and so on. At the same time, some of these provisions which were not to be challenged benefited the non-Malays. Also, the fifth principle of the *Rukunegara*, Good Behaviour and Morality, was interpreted in a sense favourable to the non-Malays, as meaning that no citizen should question the loyalty of another citizen on the ground that he belongs to a particular community."[3]

9. The specific measures taken in connection with the second cause to which the riots were attributed (see paragraph 3) took the form of the programmes set out in the New Economic Policy (NEP). Both the NCC and the DNU played an important role in the formulation of the NEP, which was announced after approval by the NOC. The NEP is discussed fully in chapter 9. Backstopping the political and economic strategies are the educational strategies described in chapter 10.

10. Parliament, which had been suspended since May 1969, was reconvened in February 1971 and one of the first tasks it had to undertake was to amend the Constitution. Article 10 of the Constitution, dealing with freedom of speech, was amended to give Parliament the power to pass laws prohibiting the questioning of any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III of the Constitution and Articles 152, 153 and 181. Until such laws were passed, the provisions of the Sedition Act, as amended by the Emergency Ordinance No. 45 of 1970, applied. Articles 63 and 72 of the Constitution were amended removing the immunity which Members of Parliament or of the Legislative Assembly of a State enjoyed from court proceedings for anything said by them in Parliament or a State Assembly. In other words, the questioning of sensitive issues was not permitted within Parliament/State Assembly or outside. The opportunity was taken also to specify in an amendment to Article 152 of the Constitution what was meant by 'official purpose' in connection with the provision that Bahasa Malaysia is the national language. 'Official purpose' was defined as the purposes of all public authorities. Amendments to Article 153 gave the King the power to give directions to universities, colleges etc. to reserve certain proportions of places for Malays as are deemed reasonable. Clause 5 of Article 159 already entrenched certain Articles of the Constitution by providing that they could not be amended without the consent of the Conference of Rulers. The Constitutional amendments proposed were passed by a majority of 126 to 17, a noteworthy feature being that those supporting them included both predominantly Malay and predominantly non-Malay parties

Although the Democratic Action Party (DAP) — which was predominantly Chinese — opposed the Constitutional amendments, the MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) supported them. In so far as the DAP was concerned, it was prepared to concede that it was a national, and not merely a Malay responsibility, to ensure a better deal for the disadvantaged, as evidenced by the fact that one of its spokesmen had on an earlier occasion stated that,

> "...it is the duty of every Malaysian to contribute to the abolition of economic imbalances between the haves and have-nots, and between urban and rural areas."[11]

Although no race is mentioned by name, the intention is clear in the light of the fact that the majority of the have-nots and the rural population are Malays.

11. All in all, the effect of the Constitutional amendments was that,

> "...the rules of the political game were altered, and the sensitive issues which were so amenable to out bidding were proscribed from the political market."[12]

The political strategy, then, has been to remove from the arena of public discussion, both within the Federal and State legislatures and outside, racially sensitive issues. To do this is not to sweep the issues under the carpet, but to resolve them through frank dialogue and discussion conducted at the highest level between representatives of the racial groups in an atmosphere insulated from the rough and tumble of political platforms. As Tun Razak has emphasized,

> "... the government policy on national unity is not by process of assimilation but by integration, that is, by mutual adjustment of diverse cultural and social traits, acceptable to all races in the country."[13]

such adjustment being a matter not for public outcries but for quiet negotiation.

12. On 1 January 1974 the *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) was officially registered as a confederation of political parties. It was composed of UMNO (United Malay National Organization), MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress), PAS (*Partai Islam Se Malaysia*), PPP (People's Progressive Party), and *Gerakan* (*Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia*). The parliamentary elections of 1974 were contested under the banner of the *Barisan Nasional*. The parties mentioned above won 61, 19, 4, 14, 1 and 5 seats respectively, and their strength may be gauged accordingly. Altogether, the *Barisan Nasional* won 104 out of the 114 seats for Peninsular Malaysia.

> "Restricted by the Sedition Act, campaigning centred around personalities of candidates and the state of the economy, especially inflation and the implementation of the NEP."[14]

The Third Malaysia Plan refers to the *Barisan Nasional* in quite enthusiastic terms :

> "The *Barisan Nasional* embodying political consensus among a wide cross-section of political parties is a distinctive feature of the country's political environment. The *Barisan* is an alliance of political parties founded on the premise that open intemperate debate and party politics based on sectional interests could divert the energies of Malaysians from the tasks of nation-building. The development of the *Barisan* lent itself to the resolution of sensitive national issues within the structure of political consensus. What emerges is a perspective which considerably reduces the susceptibility of the country to open conflict between individuals and groups. In its short history, the *Barisan* has demonstrated its capacity for meeting divisiveness within society."[15]

13. The concept of insulators and apertures, elaborated by Yogesh Atal with reference to the Indian context, is pertinent for appreciating the political strategy of the government of Malaysia.[16] The masses are insulated from demagogy, both within

Reference has already been made in paragraph 4 to the common examinations available, and no further elaboration is necessary. The following account has been given of developments during the decade of the 1970s:

> "... curriculum in schools was developed not only to impart skill and knowledge but also to instil and inculcate values and norms in line with the principles of Rukunegara. Besides having common syllabus and examinations, the curriculum also gave importance to various aspects which would contribute towards national unity and a disciplined society. These included religious education for Muslim students, civics, history and geography which gave emphasis on the historical, economic and social development of Malaysia and the Asian region."[1]

C. The expansion and diversification of educational facilities

7. It will be recalled (see chapter 9 paragraph 2) that Malaysia has committed itself to the achievement of national unity through a two-pronged development strategy of

   (i) eradicating poverty by raising the income levels and increasing the employment opportunities for all Malaysians irrespective of race; and

   (ii) restructuring society so as to reduce the economic imbalances that exist among the various races in Malaysia and to eliminate eventually the identification of race with economic functions.

The role of education in the achievement of these objectives has been fully recognized by the government. Increasing access to primary education and improving its quality are central to both objectives. There has been a noteworthy increase in enrolment in primary education in the 1970s, the enrolment of 85.1 per cent of the six to eleven year age group having risen to 91.4 per cent by 1980. Some States are behind the others. For example, according to data collected in 1976, the enrolment ranged from 76.5 per cent in the State of Malacca to 92.2 per

cent in the State of Pahang. Of course, even within a single State there are differences in various parts of it. It is recognized that attention should be paid to the more equitable distribution of resources and facilities if the gaps in educational opportunity between the rich and the poor, and among the various regions in the country are to be narrowed. Between 1970 and 1980, 12,087 classrooms were built to provide for the increased enrolment and to replace sub-standard facilities in the rural areas. It is relevant to note that the increase in primary and lower secondary enrolment is partly a function of the numbers repeating in standard one, and partly a function of their remaining in school as promotion is automatic and there is no examination barrier between the primary and the lower secondary levels. In this connection, a carefully planned study was undertaken in 1972 on the problem of drop outs.[4] The purpose of the study was to identify the causes leading to drop outs from the primary and the lower secondary schools with a view to recommending policies and programmes that would improve retention rates, and enhance life chances especially for the rural poor. Some of the recommendations have already been carried out.

> "A number of small schools in the rural areas, especially at the primary level, were amalgamated to the extent possible so as to effectively utilize resources aimed at improving the quality of education. Scholarships were also awarded to needy pupils at the secondary level..... A Textbook Loan Scheme was introduced in 1975 to provide basic learning facility to pupils from the low-income group. Supplementary feeding programme was introduced in schools in 1976 to improve the health of rural children and their performance in schools."[5]

Considering the fact that children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds find it particularly difficult to cope with their studies during the early years of schooling,

> "... an experimental project is currently being undertaken to develop appropriate teaching-learning strategies and materials for the compensatory and remedial education of

these children. One of the strategies being attempted is the involvement of parents, especially mothers, and other members of the community in the education of children. It involves the imparting of relevant skills to parents and community members to enable them to help their children with their study at home ; the development of teaching-learning materials for use in the home community centre-school ; and the setting up of children's libraries in community centres." [2]

Mention may also be made of the school health programme which has been given renewed emphasis in recent years. During the Fourth Plan period 1981-1985, it is proposed to build 8000 classrooms.

"Some of the new classrooms will be built mainly to replace the sub-standard facilities of schools in the rural areas, and to reduce over-crowding in those in the urban schools."[3]

In the urban schools, where the average class size is 42, the class size will be gradually reduced to 32 by the end of the Fourth Plan period. The average class size of 30 in the rural schools will be maintained.

8. **Science schools :** In view of the paucity of facilities for science education in rural areas — a paucity that worked to the disadvantage of Malays more than any other racial group — the Second Malaysia Plan 1971 — 1975 provided for the establishment of ten residential schools with an intended enrolment of 1,200 students, mostly from rural areas, in each school. It was envisaged that these schools would focus on the teaching of science and mathematics, and provide opportunities for rural students to make use of centralised educational facilities. Admission was to be open to the children of all ethnic groups residing in rural areas, but naturally as the rural population was predominantly Malay, the enrolment in the science schools reflected this situation. The Third Malaysia Plan 1976 — 1980 reported the establishment of eleven residential schools during the period 1971 — 1975 and made provision for the establishment

of seven more residential schools, and an enrolment of 15,000 students by the end of the plan period. It would seem from the Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981—1985 document that not only were these additional schools not established by the Ministry of Education, but also that one of the eleven reported to have been established earlier has been abandoned, as the document refers to ten residential schools only.[4] Moreover, the total enrolment is reported as 6,162 students in 1980, indicating an average of 616 students per school, which is slightly more than half the number envisaged in the Second Malaysia Plan. Thus, the expansion of science and mathematics education in residential schools for the benefit of the rural children has shown a serious shortfall not only in the number of schools established but also in the number of students enrolled. In other words, there has been a serious breakdown in the support of the education sector to the objectives of the New Economic Policy. The situation in regard to science education has been mitigated to some extent by the fact that MARA established during the period 1976—1980 five Junior Science Colleges to provide secondary science education facilities for Bumiputera children. By 1980, the enrolment in them was 3,390. Especially in the light of the racial imbalance in professional fields pointed out in chapter 9 paragraph 21, and further documented below with reference to enrolment figures, a disappointing feature of the Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981– 1986 is that it makes no provision for the further expansion of facilities for science education.

9. **Balance in enrolment :** From the point of view of meeting the manpower needs of the country, an improvement in the proportion of students enrolled in science and technical courses is desired.

TABLE 1

Rates of enrolment in the upper-secondary schools, 1976

Field	*Enrolment (percentage)*
Arts	61.1
Science	31.8

Field	*Enrolment (percentage)*
Technical/Vocational	7.1

(*Source* : Data supplied by the Ministry of Education)

A somewhat better balance was seen at the post-secondary level in regard to the enrolment in Arts and Science.

TABLE 2

Rates of enrolment in the post-secondary schools, 1976

Field	*Enrolment (percentage)*
Arts	52.9
Science	47.1

(*Source* : Data supplied by the Ministry of Education)

It should be noted that the more favourable proportion of science students enrolled does not mean an absolute increase in numbers between the two levels. It is just that the provision of school places brought about this balance. As a matter of fact, the total enrolment in all courses at the post-secondary level was only a tenth of the total enrolment at the upper-secondary level. Another point to be noted is that the post-secondary ratios were a poor indicator of the admission pattern to tertiary education. The ratio of Arts passes to Science passes at the end of the post-secondary level was 2 : 1 regressing the Science : Arts balance more or less to what it was at the upper-secondary stage. A scrutiny of the enrolments in higher education institutions shows noteworthy progress between the years 1970 and 1980, though still short of the objective of making the Arts to non-Arts ratio 1 is to 2.

TABLE 3

Enrolment at degree courses in 1970 and 1980 by fields of study

Field of study	*Enrolment*			
	1970		1980	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Arts				
Arts and humanities	3535		6139	
Economics and business	1342		3170	
Sub-total :	4877	63.5	9309	47.8
Science				
Medicine and dentistry	581		1409	
Agriculture and related sciences	324		721	
Other sciences	1503		5961	
Sub-total :	2408	31.4	8091	41.6
Technical				
Engineering	392		1666	
Architecture and town planning			251	
Surveying			162	
Other technical				
Sub-total :	392	5.1	2079	10.6
TOTAL :	7677	100.0	19479	100.0

(*Source* : Government of Malaysia. *Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981 - 1985*. Kuala Lumpur. 1981. Table 4 - 10).

TABLE 4

Enrolment at diploma courses in 1970 and 1980 by fields of study

Field of study	*Enrolment*			
	1970		1980	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Arts				
Arts and humanities	482		1705	
Economics and business	886		4377	
Sub-total :	1368	41.2	6082	41.2
Science				
Agriculture and related sciences	545		980	
Other sciences	344		2482	
Sub-total :	889	26.8	3462	23.4
Technical				
Engineering	722		3459	
Architecture and Town Planning	225		739	
Surveying	114		635	
Other technical	—		399	
Sub-Total :	1061	32.0	5232	35.4
TOTAL :	3318	100.0	14776	100.0

(*Source* : Government of Malaysia. *Fourth Malaysia Plan* 1981 — 1985. Kuala Lumpur, 1981. Table 4 — 10).

The following points may be noted from these two tables.

1. The enrolment in degree courses increased 153.8 per cent. and the enrolment in diploma courses increased 345.0 per cent. The greater increase in the latter was intentional, and was the result of a determined effort to meet the shortage of manpower at the sub-professional and technician levels.

2. The percentage of students enrolled in degree programmes in arts declined from 63.5 per cent in 1970 to 47.8 in 1980, while the percentage enrolled in degree programmes in science increased from 31.4 per cent to 41.6 per cent, and the enrolment in degree programmes in technology increased from 5.1 per cent to 10.6 per cent. The trend was thus in a direction in accordance with manpower requirements. At the diploma level, however, the percentage enrolled showed a slight decrease in science fields over the period 1970 to 1980, and a slight increase in technical fields.

From the point of view of restructuring society, while overall increases are important in the sense of providing more for everyone to share, it is really the Bumiputera representation that is critical. This issue is explored below with reference to science-based fields, which are the important ones from the point of view of both employment opportunities and the potential contribution to national development.

Universiti Malaya

10. The Universiti Malaya is the longest established and the most prestigious of the universities in Malaya. It offers courses in the following fields : Arts, Economics and Administration, Law, Science, Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering, and Agriculture. The enrolment in the science based courses during the academic year 1976/77 was as follows, separately for Bumiputera students and others:

TABLE 5

Enrolment at the Universiti Malaya in science-based degree courses, 1976/77

Course	*Bumiputera*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Science	270	17.2	1303	82.8
Medicine	204	32.2	430	67.8
Dentistry	64	50.4	63	49.6
Engineering	88	11.0	714	89.0
Agriculture	13	86.7	2	13.3

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia).

The pre-ponderance of non-Bumiputera students may be seen from this table. It should, however, be mentioned that the university also had a pre-university course with 145 science, students, of whom 144 were Bumiputeras ; 50 medical students of whom 49 were Bumiputeras ; and 34 engineering students, all of whom were Bumiputeras. The pre-university course is primarily meant for students from rural areas where facilities for the teaching of science and mathematics are limited and are a means of giving them an opportunity to equip themselves to pursue the ordinary university courses. In view of the fact that Bumiputeras constitute the majority of the rural population, this provision also helped to increase their enrolment *vis-a-vis* the other ethnic groups. In this sense, it contributes to an improvement in Malay representation in university courses.

Universiti Sains

11. Universiti Sains offers courses in the following fields : Humanities, Humanities and Education, Social Science, Science, Science and Education, Applied Science, Pharmaceutical Science, and Housing, Building and Planning. The enrolment in the science-based courses in 1976/77 was as follows, separately for Bumiputera students and others:

TABLE 6

Enrolment at the Universiti Sains in science-based degree courses, 1976/77

Course	*Bumiputeras*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Science	164	46.7	187	53.3
Science and Education	40	8.5	429	91.5
Applied Science	26	20.2	103	79.8
Pharmaceutical Science	68	39.8	103	60.2
Housing etc.	71	45.2	86	54.8

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia).

Here again there is a pre-ponderance of non-Bumiputeras. This university also had an enrolment of 141 students, all Bumiputeras, in a pre-science course. The rationale for this course is the same as that stated for the pre-university course at the Universiti Malaya.

Universiti Kebangsaan

12. This university was established in 1970, incorporating the Muslim College which was an institution of higher Islamic education in Malaysia. The following table shows the enrolment in science-based courses during the academic year 1976/77 separately for Bumiputera students and others.

TABLE 7

Enrolment at the Universiti Kebangsaan in science-based degree course 1976/77

Course	*Bumiputera*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Science	611	93.7	41	6.3
Medicine	300	92.0	26	8.0

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia.)

In this university, the Bumiputeras were in a clear majority. It is open to all Malaysians, irrespective of race, but as the medium of instruction is Bahasa Malaysia, applicants for admission should be competent in it. English is taught as a second language.

Universiti Pertanian

13. Universiti Pertanian was established in 1971 by the amalgamation of the College of Agriculture, run by the Department of Agriculture, and the Faculty of Agriculture of the Universiti Malaya. The enrolment in the degree courses in 1976/77 was as follows for Bumiputera students and others:

TABLE 8

Enrolment in science-based degree courses at the Universiti Pertanian, 1976/77

Course	*Bumiputera*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Agriculture	265	77.7	76	22.3
Forestry	84	80.0	21	20.0
Veterinary Science	53	67.1	26	32.9
Science and Education	103	85.8	17	14.1
Agricultural Engineering	46	88.5	6	11.5
Environmental Science	13	76.5	4	23.5
Food science and Technology	19	79.2	5	20.8

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia.)

In this university, the Bumiputeras constitute the majority in the degree courses as shown in Table 8. The university also offers diploma courses in which, too, the Bumiputeras constitute the majority as would be evident from the following table:

TABLE 9

Enrolment in science-based diploma courses at the Universiti Pertanian, 1976/77

Course	*Bumiputera*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Agriculture	932	91.4	88	8.6
Forestry	55	93.2	4	6.8
Fisheries	71	93.4	5	6.6
Science and Education	528	100.0	—	—
Home Science Technology	73	84.9	13	15.1
Animal Husbandry	149	87.1	22	12.9

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia.)

Universiti Teknologi

14. In 1972, the Technical College, which was providing training to technical apprentices in the Public Works Department, the Malayan Railways and the Survey Department was raised to the status of a university and named at first as the Institute Teknologi Kebangsaan, but later the name was changed to Universiti Teknologi. Both in the degree courses and the diploma courses Bumiputeras constitute the majority of the enrolment as will be seen from tables 10 and 11 given below;

TABLE 10

Enrolment in science-based degree courses at the Universiti Teknologi, 1976/77

Field of Study	*Bumiputeras*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Engineering	364	87.3	53	12.7
Surveying	78	82.1	17	17.9
Architecture	28	82.4	6	17.6

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia.)

TABLE 11

Enrolment in science-based diploma courses at the Universiti Teknologi 1976/77

Field of Study	*Bumiputeras*		*Others*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Engineering	1138	88.8	144	11.2
Surveying	206	94.5	12	5.5
Architecture	126	86.3	20	13.7
Scientific Research	184	95.8	8	4.2

(*Source* : Data provided by the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia.)

It will be noted from tables 6 to 11 that in the two long established and prestigious universities, namely the Universiti Malaya and the Universiti Sains, the Bumiputera representation is lower than its proportion in the total population of the country, whereas in the three relatively younger universities established after 1970 the Bumiputeras constitute the majority. In connection with enrolment in degree courses, it is relevant to note that in degree courses in institutions abroad, in 1980 the Chinese students numbered slightly more than twice the number of Bumiputeras, the relevant numbers being Chinese 11,558, and Bumiputera 5,194. The number of Indians so enrolled was 2,676. What the Chinese were losing on the swings in Malaysia, they were gaining on roundabouts overseas. The situation was much the same in regard to diploma and certificate courses. Moreover, the Chinese were patronising local private institutions to a greater extent than the Bumiputeras. The following table bears this out:

TABLE 12

Malaysia : Enrolment in Diploma and Certificate courses in 1980 in (a) local public institutions (b) local private institutions (c) overseas institutions

	Bumiputeras	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Diploma courses					
(*a*) Local public institutions	12494	2069	184	29	14776
(*b*) Local private institutions	577	4358	943	90	5968
(*c*) Overseas institutions	1811	2563	515	64	4953

	Bumiputeras	*Chinese*	*Indians*	*Others*	*Total*
Certificate courses					
(*a*) Local public institutions	1612	850	102	33	2585
(*b*) Local private institutions	554	3029	455	54	4092
(*c*) Overseas institutions	194	4351	654	64	5263

(*Source*: Extracted from Saleh, Dato Ahmed Haji, *Malaysia's experience in the application of long-term educational planning techniques*. Mimeo. 1981. Table 3.1.

What indeed all this goes to show is that when a racial group has got off to a flying start, it is not easy for another group that makes a late start to catch up.

D. Moral education

15. Writing in 1971, Francis Wong and Yee Hean Gwee pointed out that the cultivation of morality and the development of the inner self are neglected in both Singapore and Malaysia and that

> "... this neglect of a very important aspect of education so basic to the development of integrated personalities leads to the production of 'unbalanced' personalities — which is a not so uncommon feature of these two societies today."[3]

Consequent to a concern expressed in the Parliament in 1977 that a programme of moral education should be introduced in schools, the Curriculum Development Centre has taken steps to draft a syllabus and prepare instructional materials. A list of moral values identified at the UNESCO-NIER workshop on moral education in Asia at the first level of education held in Tokyo in May–June, 1975 was circulated among a representative group of Malaysian citizens (professionals as well as

others), and they were asked to identify those which they considered crucial in the context of Malaysia. They identified 16 values, the listing below being in alphabetical order : 1. Cleanliness of body and mind : 2. Compassion empathy : 3. Co-operation : 4. Courage : 5. Diligence : 6. Freedom : 7. Gratitude : 8. Honesty-integrity : 9. Humility modesty : 10. Justice : 11. Love : 12. Moderation : 13. Public spiritedness : 14. Rationality : 15. Respect : 16. Self-reliance. A few concepts to be included under each value were also identified. For example, the concepts identified under compassion empathy were : charity, kindness, consideration for others, hospitality, generosity, tolerance, understanding, and patience. The following were listed under co-operation : sharing responsibility (reciprocal mutual commitment), fraternity, sharing common interest, solidarity. The following were listed under love : love for natural surroundings, love for life humanity, love for nation (patriotism/loyalty), love for peace and harmony as opposed to friction and strife, love for democracy. The following example, detailing specific objectives and suggested activities for teaching the concept of love for peace and harmony as opposed to friction and strife should be of interest.

"Specific objectives :

To understand the reasons for the need to love life and humanity :

To be aware of the need for the different communities in Malaysia to exist side by side in peace and harmony :

To demonstrate in words and deeds an awareness of the importance of maintaining peace and harmony among the various communities.

Suggested activities :

A. Relate an incident in story form to portray

1. fellow-feeling irrespective of race or religion ;

2. fellow-feeling despite life's competition ;
3. unselfishness ;
4. a split-second choice of a value that would build up goodwill.

B. Distribute work-sheets on the said narration referred to in A with follow-up questions, filling in blanks, relevant passages which would stimulate thought."[16]

It will be noted from the brief description given above of the moral education project that it is of importance from the point of view of nation-building in a plural society. Reference may also be made here to a research strictly undertaken to find out whether there were significant differences in value orientations among the English medium secondary school pupils belonging to the major racial groups in Melaka, namely the Chinese, the Malays and the Indians/Pakistanis/Ceylonese. One of the findings was that adolescent boys and girls of Melaka had many values in common though they belonged to different racial groups.[17]

Notes and References

1. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, 22 September 1969, Cited by Tan, Ta Sen, *Language process in insular Southeast Asia : a comparative study*, Singapore, 1978, *p.* 10.

2. Tan, Ta Sen and Chong, Yong Mun, *Background paper for seminar : Trends in Malaysia*, Singapore, 1971, *p.* 114. Cited by Tan Ta Sen, *loc. cit.*

3. Wong, F. H. K. and Gwee, Y. H. *Perspectives : the development of education in Malaysia and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur, 1972, *p.* 124.

4. Onn, Hussein, *Our education policy*, Paper presented at the First Alliance Seminar for M.P.s, Senators, and Members of State Legislative Assemblies, Kuala Lumpur, 18 February 1971. Cited by Wong, F. H. K. and Gwee, Y. H. *op. cit.*, *p.* 155.

5. There was the option of enrolment in the Remove Class in an English medium school until 1974 for students who had received their primary education in Malay, Chinese, or Tamil but the option ceased after 1974, as 1975 was the last year when the English medium Form I was permitted.

6. *The Straits Times*, 3 April 1971. Cited by Wong, F. H. K. and Gwee, Y. H. *op. cit.*, *p.* 50.

7. *The Straits Times*, 28 June 1970. Cited by Wong, F. H. K. and Gwee, Y. H. *op. cit.*, *p.* 145.

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10. Malaysia. Ministry of Education. *Dropout study*. Kuala Lumpur, 1973.

11. Malaysia. *Fourth Malaysia Plan* 1981—1986. Kuala Lumpur, 1981, *p.* 344.

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16. Malaysia. *Moral education in Malaysia – a status report*. Country report submitted to a regional workshop for completion of a joint study on moral education in Asian countries, Tokyo, 1980, *p.* 40. The stories used had been adapted from Book IV of Moral Science Series (Macmillan).

17. Lim, H. K. *Profiles in value orientations: common ethnocultural values of Malaysian students — a survey of Form IV pupils in Melaka*. M. Ed. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1974.

CHAPTER 11

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

A. RETROSPECT

(a) Politics

1. As of the year 1825, the Malay Peninsula consisted of a conglomeration of eleven states, ruled by Malay Sultans, with four of them acknowledging a loose sovereignty to Siam. Britain in the pursuit of trading interests obtained a foothold in the Malay Peninsula, and capitalising on the unsettled political conditions obtaining in the Malay States extended her rule, euphemistically termed protection, over the entire peninsula having warded off Siamese claims as well by a treaty with Siam. Thus a political unit known as British Malaya was created.[1]

2. The major racial group in the country consisted of Malays. A small number of Chinese were already there in a few Malayan towns by 1825, but large numbers came later to work in the tin mines, hired first by Chinese entrepreneurs and later by European entrepreneurs. Chinese interests simultaneously spread on a large scale to trade, predominantly in urban centres but to a small extent in rural areas as well. The British started rubber plantations, importing South Indian labour in large numbers to work in them. Later immigrants from India worked in road and rail construction or engaged in trade. It was in this way that Malaya became a multi-racial society. The races were distinguished by linguistic and religious differences also. The population in urban centres was predominantly non-Malay, while the population in rural areas was predominantly Malay.[2]

3. Politically, the next important development of which note has to be taken is the largely Chinese dominated communist insurgency immediately after World War II ended. The Chinese involved were not the urban Chinese, but the rural Chinese. It was eventually quelled, but it had educational repercussions in that it made the British conceive of a plan to make only English and Malay the recognised media of instruction through the mouth-piece of the Barnes Committee.[3]

4. The next important issue was that of citizenship rights for non-Malays on the eve of independence. Relatively easy conditions were at first proposed by the British, but they were vehemently opposed by the Malays and led to the introduction of rather stringent rules. A relaxation of the conditions was part of the bargain struck by the Malays and the Chinese. The Chinese for their part agreed to the recognition of Malay as the national language, and special rights for Malays in return for the rights of citizenship and freedom to engage in trade and commerce. The Constitution of 1957 incorporated the major features of the bargain. While Malay became the national language, the use of English was permitted as an additional official language for a further period of ten years, when the matter was to come up again for decision. Transfer of power took place from the British to a government formed by the Alliance Party, which consisted of a coalition of Malay Chinese, and Indian parties.[4]

5. As 1967 approached when a decision regarding English was due, there was a certain amount of controversy arising from Chinese demands that Chinese should also be declared an official language. The National Language Act of 1967 made Malay the sole national language, but the continued use of English was permitted for certain purposes until 1973.[5]

6 Communally inspired politicking during elections in 1969 led to Malay-Chinese riots on 13 May 1969. Parliament was suspended and all legislative and executive power was vested in a National Operations Council (NOC), which was multi-racial.[6] The NOC attributed the rioting to two causes, namely (1) the stirring up of mass passions by questioning

constitutional provisions pertaining to citizenship, the national language, and the special rights of Malays (2) the disadvantaged economic condition of the Malays *vis-a-vis* the Chinese in particular, and the consequent frustration felt by the Malays.[7] The NOC decided that nation-building was the priority task before the country, and that the basic causes mentioned above should be eliminated. The public discussion of sensitive issues was prohibited as seditious under an Emergency Ordinance, and a New Economic Policy was drawn up.[8] Parliament was reconvened in 1972, and legislation was enacted incorporating the above mentioned prohibition and extending its application even to the proceedings of the Federal and State legislatures.[9] The *Barisan Nasional*, which is a coalition of several racial parties, forms the government now and provides a formal mechanism for the private discussion of racial problems and issues. Insulation of the masses from being stirred up on sensitive racial issues, and apertures for private discussions — to use Yogesh Atal's felicitous phraseology of insulators and apertures — are a major component of the political strategy.[10] Another is the commitment to the national ideology, *Rukunegara*, which promises fair play to all races by the values enshrined in it.[11] The political strategies are supported by educational and economic strategies, so that the drive for national unity has three closely co-ordinated prongs.

(*b*) **Education**

(i) *The period* 1825 — 1950 : *pluralism, inequality, divisiveness.*

7. The educational tradition prevalent in Malaya before the British intervention was strictly religious being confined to Koranic instruction through Arabic. As in all British possessions, Christian missionary enterprise followed the British flag ; but unlike in some of the possessions, the missions were under strict instructions for strategic reasons not to tread on Islamic religious susceptibilities. The educational efforts of the missionaries were almost exclusively directed towards the urban Chinese and the Indians, who were thereby given a head start in access to a fee-levying English education, with all the advantages that flowed from it. For the mass of the Malays who

lived in rural areas, as well as to those in urban areas, a rudimentary third or fourth standard primary education in the Malay medium was provided free by the British government. Requests both for some exposure to English, and for education in Malay beyond the fourth standard were decisively rejected.[12] A scholarship scheme was later introduced to transfer a few Malay boys to English schools, but it was no more than a drop in the ocean. To cap it all, no Malay was allowed to follow classes through the medium of English without first passing the fourth standard in Malay. No such requirement pertaining to their languages applied to the Chinese and the Indians. For the Malay aristocracy, however, the British government made provision for an English education as from 1905, recruitment to the lower ranks of the bureaucracy being open exclusively to the alumni of the Malay College, as the particular institution was called.[13] Indeed, this ensured that Malays with a good English education would be occupied in the maintenance functions of British colonial rule, and was counterproductive in the long run as far as the Malays were concerned, as they did not venture into the realms of commerce and business.[14]

8. Apart from access to government or missionary education in English in urban centres, the Chinese left to fend for themselves developed a private Chinese medium school system in both rural and urban areas (in the latter, as there was an insufficiency of places in English medium schools). The Chinese school system was divisive in that the schools obtained their teachers and books from mainland China, which looked upon the Chinese schools in Malaya as an extension of mainland China's educational system. It was not until the 1920s that the British sensed a threat in the existence of independent Chinese schools, and introduced legislation to control them, offering financial aid to them subject to their using for instruction *not* Kuo-Yu which had become the national language of China but the various dialects.[15] This attempt to prevent the use of a common language, carrying with it the potential for creating a sense of unity among the various Chinese groups in Malaya, was rejected by the Chinese who preferred to teach

in Kuo-Yu and forego government grants. By 1950, the British were convinced that the continuance of Chinese medium schools would make them a source of communist indoctrination, and contrived a plan which is noted in paragraph 10 below.

9. The Indians in urban centres patronised government and mission English medium schools to the extent that places were available. Those living in rural areas received a rudimentary education in schools provided by estate owners or by the government. The schools obtained their teachers and books from India, but as India was a British colony no extraterritorial loyalties were fostered.

(ii) *The period* 1950 — 1969 : *language medium and national unity.*

10. The Barnes Committee, appointed in 1951 to report on Malay education, recommended that in order to forge national unity, Chinese and Tamil should not be permitted as media in primary schools, and that primary education should be imparted bilingually through English and Malay, while English would be the medium at the secondary level. Chinese and Tamil would be taught as subjects at the primary level. In short, the abolition of Chinese and Tamil medium schools was envisaged in the interests of national unity, a concern which had no parallel in other British colonies that were plural societies. It was thus not a matter of principle, though expounded as such, but a pragmatic approach for meeting a local problem. While the opposition from the Indian community was on a low key, the Chinese community opposed the Barnes recommendation vehemently. The British government appointed another committee, the Fenn-Wu committee, which recommended the continuation of schools in all four media – English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. To ward off the threat to their schools, the Chinese more or less agreed that they would be trilingual in Chinese, English and Malay.[16]

11. The Central Advisory Committee on Education,requested to study the two reports and make recommendations, proposed

primary schools teaching in either the English medium or the Malay medium, with provision in each to teach the other language, as well as Chinese and Tamil as subjects. The Education Ordinance of 1952 was based on this recommendation, but it proved financially impossible to implement it, as it involved the conversion of several hundred schools to the English or Malay medium.[17]

12. The government then appointed a Special Committee which agreed with the policy embodied in the Ordinance, but considering that finances did not permit implementation suggested a ceiling on admissions to English medium schools. The imposition of this ceiling was a decisive step in making the Malay medium school rather than the English medium school the national school of the future. In other respects, the *status quo* was maintained. This meant in effect that government supported primary education would be in all four media, government supported secondary education would continue in the English medium and be extended to the Malay medium as and when such classes or schools are established, while private Chinese medium secondary schools would continue.[18]

13. A climate for change came with the acceptance by the non-Malays of Malay as the national language in return for citizenship concessions. Thus, the multi-racial Razak Committee of 1956 could say that the ultimate objective of educational policy must be to bring together gradually the children of all races under a national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction ; that Malay medium schools would be called standard schools, while schools using other media would be called standard-type schools ; that the government would spend its energies on the promotion of Malay as the main medium of instruction, with English as an additional language, while provision would exist in such schools for teaching Chinese and Malay as subjects ; that Malay and English would be compulsory subjects in all schools ; that a knowledge of Malay would be necessary for admission to all secondary schools supported partly

or wholly from government funds, and also for entry into government services. The way was paved for the first Malay medium secondary classes and schools to be started as from 1957 (which the British had denied the Malays for more than six decades), while retaining English medium secondary schools as well. Private Chinese medium secondary schools also continued.[19]

14. The multi-racial Rahman Talib Committee of 1960

(i) approved the principle of providing primary education through the English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil media, but stated that to perpetuate the language differential beyond that stage in the publicly financed educational system would be incompatible with an educational policy designed to create national consciousness and make Malay the national language :

(ii) recommended that publicly financed secondary education should be through English or Malay, with the intention of making Malay the main medium in due course :

(iii) recommended that Malay medium schools should be called national schools and that other fully assisted schools should be called national-type schools :

(iv) recommended the provision of a Remove Form as the first year of secondary school for students switching over to the English or Malay medium at that level after receiving primary education through another medium :

(v) recommended that admission from the primary to the secondary level should be based on the Malayan Secondary School Entrance Examination conducted in all four language media, but with Malay as a subject ; also that the Chinese Secondary School Promotion Examination should be discontinued :

(vi) stated the principle that public examinations at the secondary level should be conducted only in the country's official languages ; recommended that the Lower

Certificate of Education Examination and the Malaysian Certificate of Education Examination taken at the end of Forms III and V in the secondary school should be in the Malay medium in addition to the English medium ; also that the Chinese Middle III Examination and the Chinese Secondary Schools Entrance Examination be discontinued with effect from 1962 ;

(viii) recommended that every candidate admitted to a teacher training college should study Malay as a second language, if it is not being taken as the main language ; and that a target date be set for making a qualification in Malay necessary for admission to a teacher's training college.[20]

15. The recommendations of the Rahman Talib Committee were embodied in the Education Act, 1961 which reiterated the intention to develop an educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction. By the Act, the Minister is empowered to make bye-laws in respect, *inter alia*, of language media and public examinations.[21]

16. Among other matters of note during this period relating to language are :

(i) the instructions issued to the University of Malaya to make preparations for the eventual use of Malay as a medium of instruction in the university :

(ii) the establishment of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Language and Literature Agency) for promoting the use of Malay for educational and other purposes ;

(iii) the introduction of a Further Education Scheme to encourage the study of Malay by the non-Malay population : and

(iv) the rejection of a proposal by the Chinese to establish a Chinese medium university.[22]

(iii) *The period* 1950 — 1969 : *towards a common curriculum content and examinations.*

17. The primary and the secondary schools using the various language media went their own way in regard to the content of the curriculum until the Special Committee of 1952 recommended that there should be a common content for all schools. The Educational Policy Paper of 1954, approved by the Federal Legislative Council in 1954 accepted this recommendation. The Razak Committee of 1956 went so far as to say that once all schools are working to a common content irrespective of the language medium, the country will have taken the most important step towards establishing a national system of education. Action was taken to issue common syllabuses and require all schools to conform to them. Common public examinations were introduced on the recommendation of the Rahman Talib Committee as noted in paragraph 14.[23]

(iv) *The period* 1969 — 1980 : *the dethronement of English and the extension of the medium of Bahasa Malaysia.*

18. The riots of 13 May 1969 convinced the government that in order to achieve the twin objectives of promoting national unity and reducing Malay disadvantage in education (i) the English medium should be abolished beginning in standard 1 in 1970 and year by year in each higher standard so that by 1982 it would be phased altogether out of school education (ii) Bahasa Malaysia (as the Malay language was to be called) would be the sole medium of instruction in the first year of secondary education in government supported schools as from 1976 and thereafter in each higher standard year by year so that by 1982 it would be used as the sole medium in all secondary and post-secondary education. In other words, Bahasa Malaysia would be used as a common medium for all racial groups in public secondary education as a means of promoting national unity. The initial decision was taken during the time that the National Operations Council was the sole authority, and implementation has been carried out as planned by the multi-racial governments that have been in power.[24]

(v) *Other educational measures to reduce Malay disadvantage*

19. Among the measures taken the following deserve mention :

(i) Efforts to increase the participation of Malays in education in general and in science-based education in particular ;

(ii) The establishment of new educational institutions, including universities, to some of which Malays have a preferential claim for admission ; and

(iii) The reservation at the tertiary level of a certain percentage of scholarships and admissions to Malays so that Malays would be educated trained in fields in which they are now under-represented.[25]

(vi) *Other educational measures to forge national unity :*

20. Apart from the use, already mentioned, of a common medium at the secondary level in all government supported institutions, a programme of moral education intended to promote mutual respect and understanding among all races is being introduced.[26]

Economy

21. The economic disadvantage of the Malays is a function of

(*a*) rural residence ;

(*b*) limited access to education ; and

(c) late entry into modern sector activities.

Rural residence : As of 1970, the Malay population was 85.2 per cent rural and 14.8 per cent urban, while the Chinese population was 52.4 per cent rural and 47.6 urban, and the Indian population was 65.4 per cent rural and 34.6 per cent urban. The majority of the rural Malays earned their living from subsistence farming, fishing, and small rubber holdings. Limited access to education : Educational opportunities did not open up in the rural areas until after independence ; and even in urban areas Malays had less access than others to

education. This is seen most patently in the low percentage of Malay literacy in English. In 1970, only 10.8 per cent of the Malays aged 10 years and over were literate in English, while the corresponding percentages for the Chinese and Indians were 21.8 and 30.0 respectively. In 1977, the percentages of the population, 17 years and above, with the School Certificate and above were 4.2 for the Malays, 7.3 for the Chinese, and 8.0 for the Indians. In 1965-66 the Malays constituted 1.1 per cent of the students reading Engineering, and 12.4 per cent of the students reading Medicine at the University, while the Chinese constituted 89.0 per cent and 78.5 per cent respectively.

Late entry into modern sector activities : The Malays were admitted early this century to the lower rungs of the government bureaucracy, but on account of limited opportunities their entry into the professional services under the government and into trade and commerce was quite late. Their ownership of assets in modern agriculture and industry, and of share capital in limited liability companies was quite small in comparison with the Chinese.

The New Economic Policy (NEP)

22. The government, attributing the riots of May 1969 to the failure on its part to redress the socio-economic imbalances in the country, adopted in 1971 the NEP with a view to achieving national unity through a two-pronged strategy of (i) eradicating poverty by raising the income levels and increasing the employment opportunities for all Malaysians irrespective of race, and (ii) restructuring society so as to reduce the economic imbalance between the races and to eliminate the identification of race with economic function. Poverty groups in the rural and the urban sectors were identified and ameliorative measures initiated. For example, the government strategies for the alleviation of rural poverty included four basic elements :— assistance to the rural poor to expand their productive capital and to use such capital effectively ; encouragement to move into more productive agricultural

employment as well as into non-agricultural employment ; the provision of education and training programmes to assist youth to acquire requisite skills for modern agricultural and industrial employment ; the provision of better housing, transportation, water supply, electricity, education, health and sanitation, and family planning. Appropriate measures were also introduced to alleviate poverty in the urban sector. Poverty eradication measures were intended to apply to all those who needed assistance, irrespective of race, but the majority of the poor were, of course, Malays. The NEP also introduced a number of measures for restructuring society. Some of the more important of these are : ensuring ethnically balanced patterns of employment in all sectors of the economy; expansion of education and training opportunities to meet the needs of the proposed employment pattern ; use of public enterprises to achieve desired employment pattern and capital ownership targets; acquisition of share capital to be held in trust for Malays ; requirement that in the expansion of the private sector guidelines for restructuring society should be observed. In addition to the Majlis Amanah Rakyat, which was formed some years earlier, a number of institutions and authorities such as Bank Bumiputera, Bank Pertanian Malaysia, Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Berhad, the Credit Guarantee Corporation, the Farmers' Organization Authority, the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority, the Federal Land Development Authority, the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority, the Malayan Industrial Development Finance Berhad, Perbandan Nasional Berhad, State Economic Development Corporations, Urban Development Authority, and Foreign Investment Committee were created to assist in the implementation of the NEP. Progress in implemeatation of policies and programmes is under constant review, but there is also awareness of the fact that the pace of change cannot be unduly accelerated.[27]

B. PROSPECT

23. Robert Panero, in an article entitled "Looking at Malaysia's prospects" in *Malaysia, 2001 : a preliminary enquiry* edited by Bruce Ross Larson, states :

> "... a breakdown of racial stability can take place because of increased inequities, because of lack of communication, or because of sublimated reactions and attitudes ... the imbalances between communities — urban and rural, educated and non-educated, high income and low income — all have racial overtones and are likely to become more aggravated unless something concerted is done to counter the trend."[28]

24. The health of the economy is crucial for the future of Malaysia. For distributive justice — as between the Malays and the other races or as between the rich of all races and the poor of all races — to take place, there has first of all to be a substantial measure of overall growth, for otherwise there would not be enough to distribute. The growth of the economy during the past two decades has been quite encouraging. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which grew at 6.0 per cent per annum during the 1970s recorded a growth rate of 7.8 per cent per annum in the 1960s. A welcome change in the structure of production also took place in the 1970s. The most noteworthy change is that the share of manufacturing went up from 13.4 per cent in 1970 to 20.5 per cent in 1980, while the share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries declined from 30.8 per cent in 1970 to 22.2 per cent in 1980. In other words, manufacturing replaced agriculture, forestry and fisheries as the chief contributor to the economy. To be sure, agriculture, forestry and fisheries also expanded during the decade but the annual growth rate was 4.3 per cent in the case of agriculture etc., while it was 12.5 per cent in the case of manufacturing.

25. A major economic dilemma facing Malaysia is the attitude to be taken towards the foreign dominance of the economy. Foreign investment has to be encouraged if the pace of growth of the manufacturing sector is to be maintained, if not accelerated. At the same time, to allow the foreign dominance to increase in strength would be to deviate from Malaysia's declared policy of transferring a greater amount of capital ownership to Malaysians. Radical measures, such as the nationalisation of foreign owned assets, are out of the question

as foreign investors would feel betrayed and invest no more in Malaysia which depends so much on foreign investment and technology. The Malaysian approach has been to create institutions which could buy up shares in the share market. The Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), a Bumiputera unit trust established in 1981, got off to a flying start when it acquired in the London share market control over the Guthrie Corporation, one of the two giant plantation holdings. But the British government has intervened since then to prevent similar take over bids by introducing new regulations controlling transactions in the London Stock Exchange. The unit trust scheme has been thought of as an answer to the charge that previously the acquisition by government agencies of equities to be held in trust for subsequent transfer to Bumiputeras only led to the creation of a Bumiputera capitalist class, spared of the risks and uncertainties of the period of entrepreneurial gestation, which have been borne by the government. Indeed, its value may be no more than symbolic for the chances are that instead of the birth of new Bumiputera capitalists, already thriving Bumiputera capitalists may have taken up the released equities, thereby reaping a bonanza and becoming super-capitalists. The unit trust scheme makes for wider participation in ownership, but the real question is as to how the mass of the Malays would benefit.

26. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who became Prime Minister of Malaysia in July 1981, made in 1970 a frank and insightful analysis which has not lost its validity. He argued as follows regarding the plight of the urban Malays, who are increasing in number on account of the limited opportunities in the rural sector :

> "There may be a few openings in the big European firms. Beyond these, there is no place for the Malays to work and earn a living in the towns and cities. The innumerable Chinese and Indian shops refuse to employ Malays. Until recently the Indians used to import their employees from India. The Chinese will not employ Malay shop assistants for a variety of reasons. The most frequent reason is that Malays do not know how to sell things.

But the Malays are also excluded from the jobs which need no skill in salesmanship. Modernized Chinese firms and banks will not employ Malays even as clerks, much less as executives. As the commercial activities in Malayan towns are almost entirely in non-Malay hands, this discrimination means that thousands of jobs are closed to the Malays. As jobs are necessary for urban living, the result of this discrimination is to push the few Malays in the towns to the rural areas and to prevent the influx of rural people into urban areas.

Perhaps the Malays, in order to live in the towns, should go into business, should start shops of their own and so provide opportunities of employment for Malays. If it is accepted that there should be no integration between races, and that in business they should stay in watertight compartments, then Malay shops in urban areas might be just the thing. Unfortunately the starting of business enterprises however small is anything but simple. For the Malays, their position of inferiority in the field of trade and industry makes such ventures even more hazardous. They would not only have to compete with people who have larger capital, but also with business traditions and experience second to none in this country. The Chinese are the people to do business with. They have a multiplicity of interlocking organizations which look after interests which are extremely communal. There are guilds and associations in almost every trade and there are powerful Chambers of Commerce. The wholesale trade is entirely in their hands, and the lack of fixed prices as well as the flexibility of their credit system mean that retailers can easily be manipulated by them..... the chances of surviving in the highly competitive field of trade and commerce in the urban areas are minimal even for the experienced and financially sound non-Malays. For the Malays these chances are reduced to almost nothing. A few may struggle along, but the majority could never even leave the planning stage. If the only way to urbanize the Malays is to have Malay enterprises in

the towns and cities, then the chances of a significant success are almost certainly nil. The only way for Malays to live in the urban areas is for the non-Malays not to discriminate against them.

> How prevalent is this discrimination against Malays? In business it is so great that it is taken for granted. A Chinese establishment, whether big or small, will just not employ any Malay except perhaps as drivers and no one will even say it is discrimination. Admittedly, the reason is often more practical than racial. Chinese businesses are conducted in Chinese with the accounting and records all in Chinese. Business connections are also almost all Chinese. Besides, the smaller Chinese shops are family concerns which depend a great deal on family loyalty as a basis for honesty. Nevertheless, it is possible to employ Malays if there is a wish to do so. The ordinary retail shops could easily employ Malay salesmen. They may not be as good as the Chinese, but they will certainly never be any good unless they have opportunities to learn. There will be drop-outs, perhaps a considerable number at the beginning. But it is reasonable to expect a few at least to persist and succeed. In the bigger Chinese firms and banks where the business language is English there seems no valid reason why Malays could not be employed. Perhaps they do not work as hard as non-Malays. There seems to be some basis for this accusation, but again it cannot be as bad as it is made out. Government departments and a number of British firms have survived with Malay employees. It is unreasonable to put all the Malays into one category and label them as lazy. A more liberal and understanding attitude is needed."[29]

This is not an expression of Malay chauvinism, but a realistic appraisal of the situation, and it is confirmed by independent observers. To quote Guy Hunter,

> "Chinese traders form a tight ring, with private channels of communication and intelligence, into which the outsider cannot break: they are not out on their own as individuals in the common open field of competition in which the nationals must make their way."[30]

The following observation in a book by three Malaysian Indian authors is also pertinent.

> "Malay economic backwardness has a racial dimension that engenders animosity towards other races, particularly the Chinese. It is unfortunate that so many of the middlemen who are seen to be exploiters are Chinese."[31]

A feeling that the Chinese ought to do something to help the Malays is not altogether absent. The Malaysian Indian authors attribute to a Malaysian Chinese, former Finance Minister Tun Tan Siew Sin, the following remark :

> "An economically depressed Malay community will never be able to achieve the desired degree of co-operation with the substantially more prosperous non-Malay communities. It is, therefore, in the long term interest of all of us to support any measures which will enable our Malay brethren to improve their economic status."[32]

This remark is even more relevant in 1982 than in 1957 when it was made. More than mere verbal support is necessary. It is in the interests of the Chinese to take determined and positive action on as wide a scale as possible to lend a helping hand to the Malays in establishing themselves in business. At the same time, Chinese business firms should provide more opportunities of employment for Malays. In its final analysis, national unity rests upon reciprocated goodwill rather than on anything else. Some dimensions of desirable Malay reciprocation are considered in paragraph 29.

27. The voluntary acceptance of a common language can be a great help in the achievement of national unity. This is not entirely a Malay point of view. The attitude of Singapore towards the issue of a national language provides an object lesson to the non-Malay population of Malaysia. When Singapore became independent in 1959, the People's Action Party government declared Malay as the national language. As noted in chapter 6 paragraphs 2 and 3, Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 but separated in 1965. It has, however, continued to retain Malay as the national

language in spite of the fact that more than 75 per cent of the population is Chinese. Besides its use in education, civil servants employed by the government have to pass an examination in Malay language at standard two level before they are confirmed in service. Bonuses are payable to those who qualify at a higher level. A working knowledge of the Malay language is required of applicants for Singapore citizenship. These gestures and requirements on the part of the Chinese government of Singapore have had the effect of mellowing the opposition of Chinese extremists in Malaysia to the use of Bahasa Malaysia. It is possible to cite from the writings of distinguished Malaysian Chinese educators extracts which favour the wider use of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia. For example, Paul Ming Phang Chang, pointing out that segregation would be inconsistent with the declared policy of using education as a means to foster social integration, writes as follows :—

> "A common school system using Malay as the main medium of instruction and English as a compulsory second language, open to all, seems to be a possible development in the future if the aim of equal opportunities of employment for all is to be achieved."[33]

Another Malaysian Chinese educator writes :

> "A common language and a common syllabus are necessary for socializing the younger generation into a national culture, but they are manifestly not sufficient to ensure national unity. If the social and cultural integration of Malays, Chinese, and Indians is to be the national ideal, surely the logical and perhaps only setting for this to be nurtured is the school. Perhaps only in this way will education as the primary instrument of nation-building be functionally integrative."[34]

A foreign observer John Platt states that the choice of Malay not only as a symbolic national language but as the main language of education and administration can be justified on several grounds. Three of the more convincing ones are :

"1. Speakers of Malay or related languages form the majority of the population ;

2. A form of Malay, however pidginized, was the early *lingua franca* ;

3. The only other inter-ethnic *lingua franca* which could have qualified as a national language is English. This, however, was mainly a language for the upper levels of the urban population and, in any case, is hardly appropriate as a symbol of a newly independent nation."[35]

David J. Banks states that the policy of spreading the national language is a very important step for Malaysia.

> "since it will mark the beginning of a very basic and crucial commitment of all of Malaysia's citizens to one regional language and the development of that language to accommodate to the needs of the modern world. Gradually, with its acceptance, demands for the recognition of and granting of equal status to other non-Malay languages should diminish and not pose a great threat."[36]

Rupert Emerson states that "the merits of linguistic uniformity are so obvious as barely to need statement," while Karl Deutsch adds the very useful qualification to this generalization that it is meaningful social communications that are essential to the development of a national consciousness and that linguistic homogeneity contributes to the growth of larger political loyalties in so far as language facilitates more widespread and more meaningful communications.[37] The main reason why the Malaysian Chinese Association would not agree to the adoption of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction at the primary level is that the Chinese parties in the opposition would make political capital out of it. Any campaign mounted in opposition would not be seditious as long as it relates to implementation (see chapter 8 paragraph 5). The Indian community may well make the first move in accepting primary education in Bahasa Malaysia for their children. In any case, the present generation of Chinese and Indians who

are receiving their secondary education in Bahasa Malaysia might be willing in course of time to have their children educated in Bahasa Malaysia beginning from the primary level. Any move to accelerate this process by compulsion would be resisted. The chances are that the economic and educational advantages to the minority communities would some day be sufficiently persuasive for them to opt for a Bahasa Malaysia primary education for their children.

28. The present quotas for admission to tertiary level education and for scholarships are more heavily weighted in favour of the Malays than indicated by their percentage in the population. The justification is perceived by Malays and non-Malays, but it would be a gesture of reciprocity towards the non-Malays if a categorical statement is made that this practice would obtain only until the present imbalances are redressed and that thereafter quotas would be based on population figures. Hon - Chan Chai, citing a study by John Bock in which, out of 34 secondary schools surveyed by him, the Royal Military College appeared to produce the closest type to an ideal citizen in the sense that its students were found to rank highest in national identity, the lowest in alienation and ethnic distrust, and had the highest occupational aspirations, goes on to say,

> "... significantly, all this was due to the fact that enrolment was based roughly on a proportional representation of the three major ethnic groups reflecting the ethnic distribution of the population at large."[38]

Bock points out that an important implication of this quota system is that students are

> "not competing against members of another ethnic group for entry but with other students of their own ethnicity."[39]

29. It is a legitimate expectation of the Chinese and the Indians that in return for the acceptance by them of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction, there would be gestures of reciprocity on the part of the Malay community. For exmple, an

assurance that measures of positive discrimination (e.g. quotas) exceeding the population level would not be continued longer than necessary and would be allowed to stabilise at the population level would be welcome. Another would be positive action to develop a Malaysian cultural heritage. For example, in art, music, dance, drama, folk literature etc. attention could be paid to their characteristic expressions in all three communities so that Malaysian children become heirs to the cultural heritage of all races inhabiting Malaysia than simply to a Malayan cultural heritage. There is no reason, for example, why a Chinese or Tamil song should not be as much a part of the repertoire of a Malaysian child as a Malay song. Inducements should also be offered to Malays to acquire an oral fluency in Chinese and Tamil as a gesture of goodwill.

30. Serious consideration should be paid as to whether the term Bumiputera has not outlived its usefulness. It is a blanket term, encompassing the Malays and the indigenous racial groups, but considering that the Chinese and the Indians living in present day Malaysia are also sons of the soil, it is perhaps time to give up the use of the term. It is possible to refer specifically to Malays and indigenous racial groups whenever necessary, and avoid the use of the term Bumiputera which has overtones of exclusion that are not warranted and sound irritatingly in Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indian ears.

31. Esman points out that the management of conflict is facilitated if the quantum of benefits and satisfactions available increases as fast as or faster than the demands on the system.[40] This quantum is a function partly of overall growth, partly of distributive justice, and partly of population size. Economic growth and distributive justice are components of the National Economic Policy. But sufficient attention is not being paid to restraining the rate of population growth. Malaysia needs to pursue population education programmes and family planning programmes with sincerity and determination and not in *laissez faire* fashion. It is understandable that one racial group should feel that it would be at a disadvantage if

it slows down its rate of population growth while other racial groups maintain high rates of growth. This is a matter on which consensus has to be reached among the racial groups. For example, if it is agreed that no couple should have more than two children and the leaders of all racial groups campaign for such a policy, possibly also with a system of appropriate incentives for compliance and disincentives for non-compliance then population growth could be contained within reasonable limits. According to a recent set of projections, Malaysia could have a high of 16.2 millions or a low of 14.1 millions in 1990.[41] There is little doubt that a Malaysia with the latter population would be a happier country for all races with a better atmospher of shared nationhood.

32. Men and women of goodwill everywhere will hope that the uniquely Malaysian political strategy of prohibiting public articulation of sensitive issues, with the attendant danger of rousing mass passions, and of substituting informal private discussion of such issues as a means of resolving them will, along with the economic and educational strategies being undertaken to redress racial imbalances in social and economic condition, cement national unity in the country and contribute to the growth of a vibrant Malaysia in which the people will think of themselves as Malaysians first and last, and not in terms of primordial loyalities. The success that Malaysia achieves will be suggestive also for other plural societies that are wrestling with the problems of divisiveness.

References

Note: Many of the references in this chapter are to earlier chapters and paragraphs which consider in detail the issues briefly surveyed in this chapter.

1. See chapter 1.
2. See chapter 1.
3. See chapter 4 paragraph 4.
4. See chapter 3 paragraphs 7 and 8.
5. See chapter 6 paragraph 4.
6. See chapter 6 paragraph 5.

7. See chapter 8 paragraph 3.
8. See chapter 8 paragraph 2, and chapter 9.
9. See chapter 8 paragraph 10.
10. Atal, Yogesh. *Building a nation : essays on India.* New Delhi, 1981.
11. See chapter 8 paragraph 8.
12. See chapter 2 paragraphs 34 and 37.
13. See chapter 2 paragraph 31.
14. See chapter 5 paragraph 6.
15. See chapter 2 paragraph 43.
16. See chapter 4 paragraphs 4 and 5.
17. See chapter 4 paragraphs 6 and 7.
18. See chapter 4 paragraph 9.
19. See chapter 4 paragraph 11.
20. See chapter 7 paragraphs 2 to 7.
21. See chapter 7 paragraph 8.
22. See chapter 7 paragraphs 11 to 14.
23. See chapter 7 paragraph 5.
24. See chapter 10 paragraph 5.
25. See chapter 10 paragraph 8.
26. See chapter 10 paragraph 15.
27. See chapter 9.
28. Panero, Robert, "Looking at Malaysia's prospects" in Larson Bruce Ross. *Malaysia, 2001 : a preliminary enquiry.* Kuala Lumpur, 1978. *p.* 172.
29. Mahathir, Bin Mohamed. *The Malay Dilemma.* Kuala Lumpur, 1970. *pp.* 82, 83.
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31. Rao, Chandriah Appa *et. al. Issues in contemporary Malaysia.* Kuala Lumpur, 1977. *p.* 27.
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INDEX

Agriculture, 5, 22, 26, 27, 37, 76, 79 — 81, 86 — 88, 116, 118 — 23, 125 — 26, 150 — 51, 153 — 54, 172 — 74.
Allen, J. de V 36.
Alliance Party, 54, 67, 91, 163.
Anderson, John, 32.
Anglo-Chinese schools 13, 29.
Arabic, 11 — 12, 164.
Atal, Yogesh, 112, 164.

Baba, Inche Gafar, 147.
Balliol College 31.
Banks, David J. 80.
Barisan Nasional 112, 164.
Barness, L. J. 60.
Barnes Committee, 59 — 63, 65, 69, 163, 166.
Bencoolen, 2.
Bengal, 7.
Bishop, David, 25.
Blundell, E. A. 15, 16.
Britain 12, 60, 90, 162.
British 1 — 9, 12 — 16, 20 — 21, 23 — 29, 31, 35 — 44, 49 — 61, 65, 69, 75, 82, 89 — 90, 162 — 66, 168, 175, 177.
British East India Company 2 — 3, 14, 15, 33.
Brunei 90.
Buddhists, 7, 9.
Bugis, 1 — 3.

Celebes 1.
Central Advisory Committee on Education 59, 62 — 63, 65, 166.
Chai, Hon-Chan 181.

Chang, Paul Ming Phang 179.
Cheeseman, H. R. 13, 59.
Chief Secretary 26.
China 1, 39, 41 — 43, 60, 62, 165.
Chinese 2, 4 — 9, 13 — 16, 18 — 29, 36 — 44, 50, 52 — 58, 60 — 63, 65, 67, 69 — 70, 75 — 91, 105 — 06, 111, 123 — 125, 128 — 130, 139, 142, 157 — 58, 160 162 — 65, 172, 175 — 82.
Chinese Language 7, 13, 15, 39 — 43, 52, 59 — 65, 68 — 70, 78, 91, 94 — 96, 100, 136 — 137, 139, 163, 165 — 69, 182.
Chinese medium schools 12, 39 — 43, 52, 58 — 63, 66 — 70, 94 — 96, 99, 136 — 37, 139, 142, 168.
Christianity 7, 9, 13 — 16, 28, 29, 39 — 40, 43 — 44, 50, 164 — 66.
Citizenship 53 — 56, 68, 90, 107, 163 — 64.
Colonial Office 3, 17, 27 — 28.
Commerce/economy/trade 1 — 5, 9, 12 — 13, 16, 24, 25, 35 — 36, 49 — 50, 52, 54 — 57, 75 — 88, 90, 106, 110, 113, 115 — 134, 162 — 65, 171 — 78, 182.
Communisim 42, 52 — 54, 58 — 60, 69, 163, 166.
Compulsory attendance 37, 95.
Confucianism 7, 39.

Democratic Action Party 111,
Department of National Unity 108.
Deputy Prime Ministre, 105.
Deutsch, Karl 180.
Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 100, 169.
Director of Education, 26, 27, 42, 59.
Director of Operations 105.
Douglas, Bloomfield, 21.
Driver, J. M., 36, 40.
Dussek, O. T. 39.
Dutch, 1, 2, 49.

Education Act of 1961, 98, 139, 169.
Education Ordinance of 1952, 63—66, 167.
Education Ordinance of 1957, 69 — 70, 95.
Education Policy Paper of 1954, 66 — 68, 170.
Emerson, Rupert, 80.

English language 12 — 14, 16 — 18, 20 — 36, 38 — 39, 43, 51 — 52, 55, 56, 59 — 70, 78, 91, 94 — 98, 139, 153, 163, 165 — 167, 172, 179 — 180.
English medium schools 12 — 14, 16 — 21, 23 — 33, 34, 44, 50 — 51, 59, 60 — 66, 68 — 70, 77, 82, 93 — 95, 99, 138 — 140, 163 — 64, 166 — 70.
Esman, Milton J. 140.
Europeans 23, 84, 162, 175.

Federated Malay States 6, 24, 31, 37, 40, 42, 44, 53.
Federation of Malaya 54, 58, 59, 63 — 64, 89 — 90.
Federation of Malaysia 90, 91, 105, 178.
Fenn, W. P. 61.
Fenn-Wu Committee 61 — 63, 65, 166.
France 2.
French 2.

Governor 3, 15 — 16, 30 — 31, 34, 53, 89.
Governor-General 2 — 3, 14 — 17.
Gwee, Yee Hean 158.

Hastings, Lord 3.
High Commissioner 31, 32, 54, 89.
Hindus 7, 9.
Hock, Lim Yew, 89.
Hunter, Guy, 77.
Hutchings, Rev. R. S. 13.

India 14 — 15, 17, 44, 166.
Indians 2 — 9, 12, 14, 19 — 25, 28, 36, 38, 43 — 44, 50, 53 — 56, 60, 62 — 63, 65, 75 — 88, 90, 105, 123 — 25, 128 — 29, 142, 157 — 58, 160, 162 — 66, 172, 175, 178 — 81.
India office, 3.
Indonesia 2.
Infant mortality 76, 77.
Inspectors of Schools, school inspection 11, 25, 32, 34, 36, 40 — 41, 43.
Institutions of higher education (other then universities 138.
Islam 5, 49, 164.

Japan 53.
Japanese 53.
Java 1.
Johore 1 — 2, 6, 27 — 28, 37, 49, 128.

Kedah 1, 2, 6, 37, 49, 127.
Kelantan 6, 49, 128.
King Edward VII Medical School 19.
Koran, Koranic Schools 11 — 12, 22, 32, 34, 164.
Kuala Kangsar 29, 32, 38.
Kuala Lumpur 23, 29, 34, 92, 100.

Larson, Bruce Ross 73.
Lee, Kuan Yew 89, 91.
Legislative Assembly 56, 110.
Legislative Council 17, 66, 93, 113, 164.
Life expectancy 75 — 76.
Light, Francis 5.
Loh, P. F. S. 35.
Low, Hugh 20.

Majlis Amanah Rakyat 122, 131 — 32, 146, 173.
Malacca 20, 33, 40, 43, 49, 128, 143, 160.
Malacca High School 29, 32 — 33.
Malacca, Straits of 1, 3.
Malays 4 — 9, 11, 14, 16 — 39, 44, 49, 50 — 57, 60, 67, 75 — 91, 105 — 107, 110 — 11, 115, 123 — 25, 127 — 31, 133, 142, 145 — 46, 150 — 58, 160, 162 — 64, 171, 173 — 79, 181 — 82.
Malay Administration Service 33, 50 — 51, 54, 83.
Malay Civil Service 31, 33, 51, 108.
Malay College 33, 38, 50 — 51, 165.
Malay language 7, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22 — 29, 33 — 39, 49 — 50, 52 54 — 55, 57 — 70, 77, 89 — 91, 93 — 100, 107, 109, 135 — 142, 153, 163 — 170, 181.
Malay medium schools 12, 17, 20, 23 — 25, 33 — 34, 37, 43, 59, 60 — 66, 68 — 70, 77.
Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association 54, 67, 91, 111 — 12 180.

Malayan (later Malaysian) Indian Congress 54, 67, 91, 112.
Malayan People's Anti-British Army, 53.
Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, 53.
Malayan Union 53.
Mara Institute of Technology 138.
Mayhew, Arthur 12.
Members of Parliament 110.
Merdeka University 110,169.
Missionaries, Christian 13 – 16, 18, 28 — 29, 39 — 40, 43 – 44, 54, 164 — 66.
Missions, Hindu 44.
Mohamad, Dr. Mahathir 175 — 177.
Muslims 7, 9, 14.

National Consultative Council 108.
National Language Act of 1967 91, 163.
National Operations Council 92, 105, 108, 163 — 63, 170.
Negeri Sembilan 5-6, 20, 30, 37, 49, 128,
New Econonic Policy 110, 116 — 134, 164, 172 – 73.
North Borneo 90.

Onn, Inche Hussain 135.
Outline Perspective Plan 116 — 126.

Pahang 6, 20, 30, 49, 128 144.
Panero, Robert, 173.
Parliament 56, 91, 110, 163 — 64.
Partai Islam Se Malaysia 112.
Peking University 41.
Penang 1 – 4, 12 – 13, 49, 127, 140.
Penang Free School 13, 33, 43.
Perak 5, 20 — 25, 25, 29, 31 – 32, 35, 37, 40, 49, 51, 127.
Perlis 6, 49, 127.
Platt, John 179.
Politics 1, 5 — 6, 9, 11, 49 — 57, 67 – 68, 89 – 92, 105 — 112, 162 – 64.
Prime Minister 90 — 92, 105, 175.
Protected Malay States 6, 20, 23, 30 — 31, 34.

Raffles. College 19, 29.
Raffles. Thomas Stafford 3.
Rahman. Encho Abdul bin Haji Talib 3.
Rahman Talib Committee 93 — 98, 168 — 70.
Rahman. Tengku Abdul 90, 92, 105.
Razak. Dato Abdul 67, 105, 108, 111.
Razak Committee 67 — 69, 93 — 95, 97, 167, 170.
Religious instruction 15 — 17.
Remote Force 94 — 95, 99, 137, 139, 168.
Residents. British 5 — 6, 20 — 23, 26, 29 — 30, 32, 34.
Resident — General 24.
Rodger, J. P. 23, 31 — 32, 37.
Royal Military College 181.
Rubber 7, 44, 76, 88, 119, 122, 162, 171.
Rukunegara 108 — 09, 143, 164.
Rural 9, 16, 50 — 51, 75 — 78, 80, 85 — 86, 91, 111, 117, 119 — 23, 136, 144 — 46, 151, 162, 163, 165 — 66, 171 — 72, 174 — 75.

Sarawak 90.
Scholarships 18, 23, 37, 50, 108, 144, 171, 181.
Selangor 1, 2, 5, 21, 23, 25 — 26, 29 — 30, 34, 37, 40, 49, 128.
Siam 6, 162.
Siamese 1, 2, 6, 49.
Sin, Tun Tan Siew 178.
Singapore 3, 4, 6, 12, 16, 19, 29, 34, 37, 49 — 50, 89 — 90, 158, 178 — 79.
Skinner, A. M. 33 — 35.
Special Committee of 1952 66 — 67, 170.
State Council 20.
Straits Settlements 3, 6, 7, 12, 14 — 20, 25, 30, 33 — 34, 42 — 43, 49, 53..
Straits Times 16.
Sultans 1 — 5, 25, 27 — 32, 49 — 50, 53, 90, 162.
Swettenham, Frank 21 — 24, 26 — 27, 31 — 32, 35 — 37.

Taiping 20 — 21, 23, 37.
Taiping School 23, 29.

Tamil language 7, 41, 59 – 69, 78, 95 — 96, 136 — 37, 139, 166 —67, 182.
Tamil medium schools 12, 43 — 44, 59, 61, 66 — 69, 94 — 95, 99, 139, 142, 166, 168.
Tamils 17, 19, 26.
Taylor, William 32.
Teacher training 34, 37 — 38, 97 – 98, 138, 142, 169.
Temenggong 3.
Times of Malaya 24.
Tin mining 5, 6, 52, 76, 88, 162.
Treacher, William 22, 32.
Trengganu 6, 49, 128.
Tunku Abdul Rahman College 138.

Unfederated Malay States 6, 53.
United Malay National Organization 53, 67, 91, 112.
Universities 18 – 19, 41, 79, 100, 108, 135, 137 — 38, 140 — 42, 148 —57, 169, 171.
Universiti Kebangsaan 140 — 41, 153.
Universiti Malaya 79, 99, 140, 150 — 53, 157, 169.
Universiti Pertanian 140 — 41, 154 — 55.
Universiti Sains 140, 142, 152, 157.
Universiti Teknologi 137, 140 – 41, 155 — 56.
Urban 9, 16, 50, 56, 75 — 78, 80, 85 — 86, 99, 117, 119, 120 — 21, 124, 136, 145.

Victoria Institution 23, 30.

Wellesley, Province 2, 33.
Whitehall 3, 17, 28.
Wilkinson, R. J. 32.
Winstedt, Richard 28 – 27, 37, 42.
Wong, Francis 158.
Wu, Teh-yao 61.

Yaakob, Tan Sri 135.

66 - 67.

95, 99.

— 42.

— 21.

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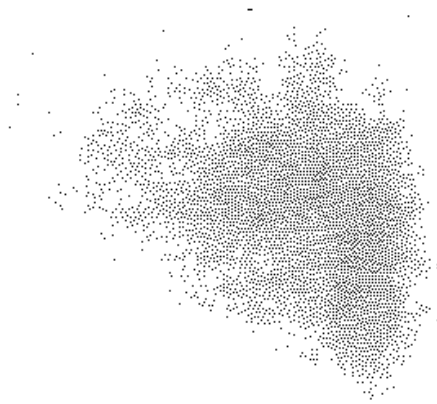
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