

THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY AT THE PERIPHERY: A MINORITY REPORT ON THE PORTUGUESE QUEST FOR BUMIPUTERA STATUS

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first time and the first opportunity that the Portuguese Eurasian Community made a statement publicly about their status was in the Constitutional Proposals for Malaya in 1947 whereby the Malayan Eurasian Union stated:

The Eurasians being the sons of the soil (*Bumiputra*)¹ in Malaya have no other country which we can regard as our homeland. Our forefathers have always claimed that as a fact and the present generation and our further generations will always claim Malaya as our Mother Country. To substantiate our claim we might mention that it would not be practical to banish a Eurasian from Malaya if he ever commits a crime calling for such a penalty.²

¹ The term *Bumiputera* is politically defined by the dominant ethnic race. The Portuguese community's quest to attain full *bumiputera* status by joining United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) was opposed by eight UMNO branches, one from Johor and seven from Melaka. Arguments against this were that the Portuguese were an insignificant minority, they were former colonialists and that they are Christians. Finally, the UMNO Supreme Council accepted the Portuguese application but had to wait for the final decision of a panel of historians to ascertain if the Portuguese are from Malay stock. A decision on this was never made to this day. According to Professor Dr. Khoo Kay Kim, the decision is a political one and not a historical one.

² At the time of the Federation Constitutional Proposals in 1948, the Eurasian Union was made up of eight States Associations namely: North Johor Eurasian Association, Malacca Eurasian Association, Negri Sembilan Eurasian Association, Selangor Eurasian Association, South Perak Eurasian Association, North Perak Eurasian Association, Penang Eurasian Association and Kedah Eurasian Association. The unity of the

Such a claim truly expresses the sentiment of all Eurasians who pledged their allegiance to the various Sultans of the Malay States. Paragraph 17 reads

That as these States are Malay States ruled by Your Highness the subjects of your Highness have no alternative allegiance or other country which they regard as their homeland and they occupy a special position and possess rights which must be safeguarded.³

The Portuguese are at a disadvantaged position being a minority in a multi racial country where other major races have attained economic and political dominance. Political patronage in business and commercial dealings gives the advantage to the community that has political dominance. Economic domination by any one particular community gives that community the advantage of acquiring capital and networking skills thereby giving that community to vast resources to accumulate capital and exploit business opportunities. The total Portuguese/Eurasian population in Malaysia in 1991 is a mere 12,086. This must be the smallest minority community in Malaysia. A state by state count of those of Portuguese descent is given in the annex of the National Census report of 1991.

The Portuguese in Melaka started of as conquerors in the 16th century but ended up as fishermen at the lowest rung of the economic ladder by the 20th century. The Portuguese are not immigrants for they conquered Melaka, the seat of power, in the 16th century of the Malay world. Their purpose was not just conquest but to acquire control of the monopoly of the spice trade and they were only interested in the port of Melaka and not the Malay hinterland. The

Federation provides an effective means by which the government maintains official contact with the Eurasian community in the Federation. The Portuguese community is the first Eurasian community formed during the Portuguese occupation of Malacca from 1511 to 1641 and they form the majority of the Eurasian community and as such has recognition by the government and the public.

³ For a detailed account of the Dutch occupation of Malacca, please refer to Fr. Manuel Texeira's three volumes of the *Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore 1511-1958*. Refer also to Leupe on *The Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese 1640-1641*.

Malay Sultanates still continued and thrived in other states. Unlike other colonial powers, the Portuguese tried to assimilate themselves into the local population through intermarriage and culture and therefore struck deeper roots into Malaysian society.

When the Dutch conquered Melaka in 1641, they allowed one shipload of war refugees to escape to Portuguese ports. Only the clergy and a few Portuguese decided to leave for Nagapatam, Batavia, Flores, Timor and Macau. The rest (1,500) decided that this was their homeland and fled inland to places where they had dealings with the natives. The *casados* Portuguese men who married native women went to Kesang, Melaka Pindah and Naning to escape from Dutch persecution of their Catholic faith. They formed secret societies of religious orders called the Brotherhood of the Church and held secret masses in hiding despite not having priests. These *casados* were in fact the first Eurasians and lived like the natives having being assimilated in Malay culture and adopting their customs (excluding Islam) which still exists to the present day. Although retaining their Catholic religion, they have Malay characteristic in their physical looks and customs. It is no surprise that there was an exchange of vocabulary in both languages. The *Kristang* (Portuguese Creole) language they speak now is a blend of Malay and archaic Portuguese words with a sprinkling of Malay grammar. In customs, there still exists *Bomoh* or shamans that use Malay verses in their chantings in the Portuguese Settlement. People still go to these *bomoh* to cast spells and wear talismans to ward off evil and still have taboos and *pantang* during the pregnancy period.

There are many examples of culinary similarities in the process of cooking the spicy curries although the Portuguese have developed their own recipes that have made them famous throughout the country. The Portuguese baked fish and the Devil Curry is always a favorite amongst Malaysians. Thousands of tourists come to the Portuguese Settlement, the cultural core of Portuguese culture and the only village of the largest concentration of Portuguese descendents in the country. This cultural assimilation of Malay and Portuguese have been going on for ages and although religion has always been a barrier there have been intermarriages amongst the present generation and both parties have accepted each other and live peacefully. Most inter-marriages nowadays are with Indians and Chinese. The

Portuguese community is in fact a true melting pot of cultures and races. One characteristic still remains and that is the pride to be a Portuguese for they still remember their brave ancestors, the "Conquistadors". Portugal is a faraway place of their dreams, and they do not ever hope to return. No Portuguese schools were ever introduced nor any support ever given by the Portuguese government to teach their language. One journalist who visited the Portuguese Settlement in the 1980s described the Portuguese of Melaka as an abandoned race who are "The bastards of the Portuguese Empire". The only Portuguese connection which existed from the 17th century to the 20th century were the Portuguese Mission of St. Peter and the priests which came from Portugal, Goa and Macau to serve in this mission. Thanks to these priests who reintroduced Portuguese dances from the different regions of Portugal that the Malaysian public can now enjoy these colorful dances and music. The actual traditional dance of these Malaysian Portuguese is the *Branyo* of which the Malay *Joget* is a derivative. The music is also from the Portuguese and the *Keroncong* where for the first time Western musical instruments like the violin (*biola*) and the ukelele were introduced in Malay music were brought by the Portuguese. Despite all these influences on Malay traditions, the Portuguese cannot be accepted because they are Christians. The Sam-sams of Malaysian Thai descent who are Buddhists, and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak are readily acceptable as they form the majority there. The Portuguese on the other hand who are a tiny minority is too insignificant to be considered. This seems to be a political question and not a historical one.

PROBLEM OF INSECURITY

Eurasians have a history of intense insecurity. Words like half-caste, *cap-ceng*, half-breed, *mesticos*, all bring to mind, a sad and lonely guilt-ridden figure – a pariah of the world. To the fiction of all ages, the Eurasian is represented as the depository of the worst traits of all races which go into the making of his being. Being too cunning, and too lazy, too ignorant and too presumptuous, morally wanton and physically weak, he is a handy scapegoat for all races. The Portuguese Eurasians have for a long time been considered as a breed of fishermen, and this stereotype have persisted until a nickname was

given to him and that is *grago* a tiny shrimp that is found in the straits of Melaka. From this shrimp is made *blacan* a paste of shrimp that is pounded made into balls and dried in the sun. The paste is much treasured by cooks as an ingredient essential to make their curries taste better. *Blacan* is also popular in other Portuguese colonies like Goa and Macau. Melaka *blacan* from the Portuguese Settlement is considered the best and is a cottage industry. The people lead simple and happy lives free from worry. The sea used to be their bank but this view is fast diminishing with reclamation and pollution threatening their livelihood.

The population of fishermen is fast diminishing and the last count taken revealed less than a hundred or 9 percent of the village population being involved in fishing. The insecurity of the sea has diminished their income and the youth are fast moving to other occupations in the factories or migrating to bigger towns like Kuala Lumpur where job opportunities are better. The majority of the population in the Portuguese Settlement numbering about 1,000 odd are senior citizens and house wives. In the early years, the Portuguese community were written of in the press as "A Forgotten Race" and "People without a Country".⁴ Whilst other Eurasians communities in other states have progressed, the Malacca Eurasians were considered the "Lower Tens" and were uneducated, and only fit for the lower paying jobs. According to a report by Chan Kok Eng in the *Geographica* dated July 1971, he states that the Portuguese Settlement contains some of the more economically depressed groups of the Portuguese Eurasian population in Melaka. Furthermore, the two priests who founded the Settlement had a specific purpose to help this economically depressed community who were scattered around Tranquerah, Kubu, Bunga Raya, Ujung Pasir and Banda Hilir. The Settlement is a sort of a Portuguese reservation with each house measuring 30 by 80 feet. When the Settlement began in the 1930s the community were given temporary occupation permits. Houses were uniformly built of planks and *attap*. The status of the land has

⁴ "People Without A Country," is an article written in the *Asia Magazine* dated 22 September 1974 by Arnold Abrams. He wrote about the alienation of the community from mainstream Malaysian society and the lack of attention given by the government to the poverty of the Portuguese community that was already quite serious at that point in time.

changed to that of lease hold for 60 to 99 years. At one stage there was a dispute concerning the land issue but this was settled. Originally 28 acres large blocks of land was allotted to the Customs and Fisheries Department, the building of a school, a Portuguese square and a playing field reducing the land area to about 20 acres. This has resulted in over crowding of up to five families living in a house. It is these people that the government thought of when they were given the opportunity to invest in the Amanah Saham Nasional (ASN)⁵ in 1984. Investment depends on availability of extra income, but judging from the low incomes, only the richer ones could afford to save in the scheme. Survival comes first and then only comes the propensity to save.

Now many of the plank houses have been damaged by termites and have undergone vast changes with the majority of the houses being made of brick. There are still some houses in their original state but these too will give way to modern living. There is some progress but the majority of the occupants are still struggling for their livelihood. There is no starvation in the Settlement and even the poor can find some form of aid from the social welfare and charitable associations who have helped some of the impoverished members of the community by giving rations and grants to rebuild their dilapidated houses. Recently a federal grant of 10 million ringgit was allotted for a project to reclaim about six acres from the sea for the building of restaurants, a car park, a budget hotel and a playing field. This development plan is good only if the resources are allotted for the benefit the Portuguese residents and not to other races. Flats have also been built by the Municipal Authority about 10 years ago to help solve the problem of over crowding. Unfortunately, the flats were also allotted to other races who reaped the main benefits thus leaving the Portuguese community to suffer from over crowding even though to a lesser degree.

⁵ The ASN and the *Amanah Saham Bumiputra* (ASB), the National Unit Trust is an institution set up by the Malaysian Government as an investment arm for the economically disadvantaged *bumiputera* community. The scheme offers a higher dividend rate when compared to other trust funds.

IDENTITY

The *Bumiputera* Policy has a racial basis and identity. The government determines who is to benefit from the scheme. An important aspect of the policy is the quota system used for the allotment of employment, educational opportunities, loans, discounts, contract and such. The only benefit that was allotted to the Portuguese was the ASN scheme where the interest rate is higher than the normal banking rate. This definitely leaves this minority race at a disadvantaged position and might also lead to borrowings from loan sharks and illegal money lenders which of course entails extra interest rate and other undesirable consequences. The ASB application form details the characteristics which is accepted as the norm to be considered a Portuguese Eurasian and thus his identity. The religion of the Portuguese is Roman Catholic. They must practice their customs and speak their localized Portuguese called *Kristang* and in their identity card must be stated *Serani*, Eurasian or Portuguese under "race". Not all these conditions could be complied with as listed by the declaration. The *Regedor*⁶ or headman who signed the declaration form could not test their knowledge of *Kristang* as not all Eurasians were brought up in Malacca. Furthermore the creole language was not taught but handed down from generation to generation and those living in other states would not have a chance to practice the language. The Portuguese Settlement is the cultural core for Portuguese culture and it is here that the language survives to this day, *Serani* is derived from the

⁶ The *Regedor* is a Portuguese word which means administrator. In this context it means the headman of the Portuguese Settlement. The position was set up when the Portuguese Settlement began in the 1930s and the *Regedor* acted as a liaison man as well as an agent for the government and he collected the yearly rent. He has been accorded the title of *Sidang* a position lower than a *penghulu* (village headman) and he receives a small allowance yearly. When the Portuguese community was given permission to invest in the ASN, his role and position changed as he was the sole leader who could approve the declaration form that declares any individual applying for the ASN to be of Portuguese descent. This led to an elevation of his position in the community and also at the national level. Other leaders among the Portuguese have sought the same role as the *Regedor* in ascertaining the descent of applicants to the ASN but they were not successful.

word *Nasrani* or *Nazareen*, a person from Nazareth, denoting Christianity.

Names are also sometimes deceiving. An adopted child might take a Portuguese name but the person might be of a different race. Many Goans from India with Portuguese names were also considered Portuguese as they could trace their ancestry from the Portuguese who were in India. For most with other kind of surnames, namely Indian, Chinese; having Chinese fathers and Eurasian mothers were not considered as Portuguese for our system follows the patriarchal system. The birth certificate is an important document that will reveal the truth of a person's descent. But this has its flaws too because at the time of recording the identity of an individual, the race could be mistaken or a false statement made. As for the practice of Portuguese culture there is no way of finding out if the person who has signed the declaration practices Portuguese culture or not. Sometimes after signing the declaration just to get the opportunity to invest, the person would denounce the Portuguese part and claim himself to be of Dutch, German and English descent. There was one individual with the surname of Scully who went back to England and claimed to be British and went on the dole when all along he was a Portuguese Eurasian. The declaration is an important document and those who sign under false pretenses could be charged under section 199 of the Penal code. This being hard to prove unless the individual makes it publicly known that he is not a Portuguese but of Dutch or Englishman descent. Freddy Scully, the President of the Portuguese Settlement Residents Association also tried to gain authority from the ASN for the power to sign the form but this was denied to him. The fact is after the Portuguese occupation of 130 years, the subsequent colonialists, the Dutch and the English assimilated into the Portuguese community, intermarried and became part of the community. The declaration form to be filled for application of ASB has defined the identity of the Portuguese. The conditions that must be met are Malaysian citizens, have Portuguese names, speak Portuguese creole *Papia*; profess the Christian faith and practice Portuguese customs and traditions. Indeed, it was difficult for the *Regedor* to follow to all the conditions and he had to waive conditions like speaking the language.

Other Eurasians of Dutch and English origins who assimilated into the Portuguese community through marriage were also accepted. The word Eurasian was coined by the British to denote the product of a mixed marriage. In India, they were known as Anglo-Indians and in Ceylon came to be known as the "Burghers". The Eurasians in Kuala Lumpur are more affluent, and economically better off than their counter part in the Portuguese Settlement. As such, there evolved two classes of Eurasians one more affluent and better educated than the other. The Portuguese Eurasians were considered as the lower tens as they held menial positions and worked as fishermen. According to the *ex-Regedor*, Mr. Michael Young, before the ASN, most of the upper tens Eurasians had a very low attitude towards the Malacca Portuguese but after ASN, they all wanted to be known as Portuguese. I myself wrote on this during this period in *The Star* newspapers dated 10th April 1992 entitled "A people called Kristang", I quote:

As the Portuguese Eurasian population began to migrate to other States, the *Regedor* took on greater responsibilities and became leader of all the Eurasians. The position was further strengthened when the Portuguese descendents were allowed to invest in the Amanah Saham Scheme. The *Regedor* became the authority to determine the person's Portuguese status, the ASN is perhaps the greatest unifier of the Eurasian Community. Where before many Eurasian people felt uncomfortable to be associated with the community now they came in droves to be part of it.

The issue of identity is an important factor in determining the status of a person and to this effect identity has become a problem when one of the parents is a non Portuguese or Eurasian. The person normally follows the patriarchal or the father's descent and this creates difficulties in determining racial descent. The word Eurasian itself is an entity in a non-entity. There is no country called Eurasia. The most dominant group of Eurasians are of Portuguese descent and therefore the government has recognized this and has given its status as a partial *bumiputera*. Portuguese culture and presence dominate the present scenario of events. According to C. R. Boxer, whom I quote:

The Portuguese with all their faults, had struck deeper roots as colonialists and so they could not as a rule be removed from the scene simply by a naval or by a series of such defeats. Of all the peoples of Europe, the Portuguese were the least affected by ideas of racial purity. To some degree this may be due to the fact that they showed a peculiar genius for assimilating the various invaders who over the early Christian centuries, swept through the Iberian peninsular.

Identity and stereotyping go hand in hand. The Malays, for example, have been stereotyped by the British as agriculturalists and only fit to be servants and drivers of the white man. The Chinese were considered to be good businessmen and hardworking, and the Indians were seen as docile plantation workers. The Portuguese on the other hand has been given the image of being musicians and fishermen. Even Lat, the cartoonist, portrayed the Portuguese representatives in an UMNO lineup as cultural musicians. One might laugh at the humor behind this, but seriously speaking, the minority Portuguese community were never given a serious thought as being a people with a goal to pursue. It is true that the Portuguese love music and it is a part of their lives and culture but they, too, have contributed to the country as teachers, lawyers and engineers. Maybe it is the dire poverty afflicting the community and the lack of representation that creates an image of this once proud race who fall from being "conquerors to become impoverished fishermen".

In a report of the Far Eastern Economic Review, entitled "Perks of the Soil" Portuguese descendants aspire for *bumiputera* status, confirms that the majority of the Portuguese residents were eager to be granted full *bumiputera* status. As a first step the community applied to be members of UMNO. This move is controversial because the Portuguese are Catholics while UMNO is traditionally a staunchly Malay and Muslim Party. The report further adds that, non Malay Christian *bumiputeras* were allowed to join UMNO in the East Malaysia state of Sabah and that Thai Buddhists in the state of Kedah voted for UMNO during the elections. Were the Portuguese Christians to be accepted by UMNO as members in the Malay Peninsular which is a Malay heartland, such a move could herald a trend towards the de-racialization of Malay politics. The Portuguese community's request drew protests from UMNO branches of Johor

and Melaka. Finally it was decided that a council decide on the Portuguese community's application. A committee of historians were to determine whether the Portuguese community should be accorded *bumiputera* status. The State Secretary, Ahmad Ithnin headed the committee which also comprises of Professor Khoo Khay Kim, UMNO veteran Datuk Hj. Aziz Tapa, Professor Yusof Hashim and Professor Zainal Keling. In a news report dated 7th March 1993, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad stated that the Portuguese must first offer proof that they are *bumiputeras* before they can apply to be UMNO members. Professor Dr. Khoo Kay Kim in an interview with *New Straits Times* said that "the question is not an issue of historical verification but is a political issue". He added "UMNO should spell out the criteria to qualify as *bumiputera* and then decide whether the definition encompassed the Portuguese descendents". The Thais and the aborigines have some kind of representation in the Senate but unfortunately the Portuguese community in Melaka does not have this privilege.

REPRESENTATION

The Eurasian Community have never been politically inclined, they never had any intention to form political parties as a race or community to contest in any Parliamentary or State seat. As such in a communally based society as in the case in Malaysia where all major races have their own political party to represent them, the Portuguese were often voiceless in terms of political representation. A comment made by a journalist before the formation of Malaysia notes

A call to Eurasians to sit up

The great majority of the local Eurasians today are therefore descendents of the intermarriage between the natives and the Portuguese, Dutch and British citizens. Only their European names remain, the trademark of their forefathers refusal to associate with the culture, language and social status of the natives of the country. A case of point are the Portuguese Eurasians in Malacca. A group of them who claim to be direct descendents of the Portuguese conquerors are still living on government's charity in a secluded section of the ancient town. They are in fact more native than the natives of the

country. Their long matrimonial ties with the local people have completely changed their mode of living. And yet they adamantly regard themselves as Portuguese. They speak a medieval Portuguese language which even the present day Portuguese find difficult to understand.

He added,

The Eurasians in Malaya has not lifted a finger to point one way or the other in determining his loyalty. His complete apathy towards national aspirations creates a small vacuum in the country's struggle for nationhood which could well be a breeding ground for communalism. The Alliance government has been very tolerant in accepting divided views of the various communities. In the case of the Eurasians, the Government has been most generous. But with Malaysia just around the corner, Eurasians cannot afford to sit and let others do the spade work for them. Those days are gone. In Malaysia, the Eurasian Association is not a political body which reflects the community's sincerity.

Even in the earlier years before independence of Malaya in 1957, the Eurasian Associations have refused to change or form political parties. The reason given is that they are too insignificant in number to have any effect in the votes. In a democracy, the community with the most political clout is the majority provided they are united in their effort. In the case of the Portuguese Eurasians, there was no strong leadership to unite them to build a united front to establish a political party. They even quarreled on the addition of the word Portuguese to their Association's name. As can be seen in the formation of SPEMA (Secretariat of the Portuguese Eurasian Malaysian Associations), the umbrella body established in 1994 that represents the interests of member associations *viz*, Kedah Eurasian Association (KEA), Malacca Portuguese-Eurasian Association (MPEA), Negeri Sembilan Portuguese-Eurasian Association (NSPEA), Penang Eurasian Association (PEA), Perak Portuguese-Eurasian Association (PPEA), Portuguese Settlement *Regedor's* Panel Malacca (PSRPM), and Selangor and Federal Territory Eurasian Association (SAFTEA). Many attempts to establish a national body of Eurasians have failed. The Secretariat is but a loose bond of associations. It is also noted that not all associations have the

word Portuguese attached to it as they cannot accept the common bond that ties the associations together which is actually the Portuguese identity that is accepted by Malaysian society.

The Eurasian community was represented once in the Senate after independence in 1957 when Dato Gilbert Shelly became a Senator to represent the Eurasians. Previously, he had held various positions as elected President of the Eurasian Union of Malaya in 1950s and represented the Eurasian community in the Federal Council 1958 as well as attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in London in 1958. After him, Bernard Santa Maria was elected for three terms in the Malacca State Legislature on a Democratic Action Party (DAP) ticket.

Recently I interviewed the *Regedor*, Mr. Peter Gomes. I asked him about recent developments in the Portuguese Settlement concerning the reclamation of a ten acre plot which will be made into a football field, a budget hotel and hexagonal plaza of restaurants and shops. According to him the reaction among the community is mixed for only a handful will benefit. The majority will still remain impoverished. For those lucky enough to receive a shop lot or work in the hotel, they will benefit and the football field will contribute to the promotion of football among the youths. He also added that other political parties have made demands that a few lots be allotted to UMNO and Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). The *Regedor*, of course, is against this for the Portuguese Settlement should be a truly Portuguese village, 100 percent of Portuguese participation is needed and this should not be disturbed by the inclusion of other ethnic groups. The exclusiveness in identifying the cultural uniqueness of the Settlement through its music, dance and food must be preserved and maintained. There are many Malay, Chinese and Indian communities throughout the country but there is only one cultural Portuguese village in Malaysia and this is the Portuguese Settlement in Melaka. The *Regedor* also lamented that the recent inclusion of political party branches like the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and organizations like the Jawatan Kuasa Kampung (JKK) has further eroded the unity of the Portuguese community as there are now too many leaders with their own political agendas in mind. The position of the *Regedor* as the sole representative of the Portuguese is therefore at stake for the

community is too small to be divided into factions. There are still a lot of petty jealousies against those who hold office and supporting the opposition is often a means to acquire position. It is the same with the ASB where only the rich will benefit. Those who cannot even spare a ringgit for the ASB need to be fed first before they can think of saving.

OTHERS

In the national census, the Portuguese Eurasians are classified under "others" which include other minority communities. "Others" in this sense means an insignificant and small community whose interests are not normally taken into consideration when it comes to implementing policy and will of course be overlooked especially in implementing the quota system which is one of the hallmarks of the *Bumiputera* Policy. The quota system is practiced in the selection of places in the university, in banks providing loans and in the allocation of housing. All these are important because the majority of the Portuguese are in the lower income bracket and it would be impossible for them to compete with other dominant races in education, business and housing. Education nowadays is expensive and the ability to afford it will determine whether the next generation will be placed on a higher level in society's scale of wealth. If the quota system is extended to the Portuguese community in an evenhanded manner, this will help the community's survival in the near future. The other privileges accruing to the Malays should also be extended to the Portuguese as they are small in numbers and will not affect or prejudice the Malays in their enjoyment of their rights and privileges. Easy availability of capital to be gained from such privilege will of course help in the eradication of poverty among the Portuguese.

Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) for example should open their doors to Portuguese students. Full loans and scholarships should be given to the Portuguese so that this will not be a burden to parents who often face the problem of providing higher education for their children. Poverty is a vicious cycle and only government intervention can stop this cycle. The most viable alternative to the traditional occupation of fishing is involvement in the food business. The

Portuguese are famous for their food, judging from the number of tourists both local and foreign who patronize the food outlets in the Portuguese Settlement. Catering food business is profitable. Therefore, the government has built the Portuguese Square and the municipality has built a row of small restaurants for this purpose. All stalls and lots in the Portuguese Square have been taken up and are being operated by the residents of the Settlement. More opportunities should be open to the Portuguese to obtain loans for this small scale businesses. The land reclamation at the present seafront to build a plaza for food and culture will be a big boost as more residents can participate in business. Banks should also give more opportunities for the Portuguese to start their own businesses and not depend on loan sharks for their capital. The Municipality should allow the Portuguese to operate their businesses from their own residences so as to save costs in paying rents for business premises. Cottage industries like the manufacture of preserved foods like *acar*, *blacan* and *cincalok* and also the dried fish called *karing-karing* which is excellent for appetizers and tid-bits that goes with drinks. A company is already marketing these products but more people should participate in these small scale businesses.

In a general survey done by the author, a question was posed to the respondents who made up of the residents of the Portuguese Settlement. The question was "What or how has the *Bumiputera* Policy and the granting of the ASB to the Portuguese community benefited them?" The majority of the respondents answered that the ASB has benefited only the rich for they could afford to invest in the ASB whereas the poorer majority has no spare cash and survival is more important. As for business opportunities, there have only been limited opportunities, like the municipal stalls selling food. The community has great potential in the promotion of the tourist industry. The community's dances, songs, food and traditions have attracted a steady stream of visitors. There used to be cultural shows in the square but this has stopped because there are no funds to finance the shows. The government must not let this culture die for in its uniqueness, it adds to the attractions of Malaysian cultural life. More food stalls have to be built to cater for the increasing demand for Portuguese food. The cultural troupes should be given annual grants to replenish their costumes and instruments. The youths must be given vocational training so that there will be low unemployment.

Banks too should set up special funds to aid the Portuguese so that they can start their own business.

CONCLUSION

The Portuguese community's future seems bleak but it is hoped the government will see to its continued survival and help its members to learn new skills and not depend entirely on fishing which is a dying occupation. The Portuguese community must be allowed to choose its own leaders and not depend of the Government to appoint one. The image of the Portuguese community as an easy going, musicians or fishermen must be eradicated. Clearly, a dynamic and strong leader is needed to bring the community out of the doldrums.

The Portuguese community is slowly losing their identity as they assimilate into the mainstream of Malaysian society. Intermarriages between the Indians and Chinese communities are most common. It is impossible to find a truly "pure" Portuguese descendent. The cultural melting pot of all communities in Malaysia is found in the Portuguese Settlement. The common language spoken is Malay, English and Creole Portuguese. Although it is advertised as a Portuguese village, a survey of its inhabitants will note the highly localized food, clothes and traditions that one will see in any Malay *kampung*. The main characteristic of the Portuguese Eurasian is his Roman Catholic faith. This is one of the most important reasons why the Portuguese community cannot be accepted as a full-fledged *bumiputera*. Furthermore, the Portuguese community is a minority community and is not significant enough to be counted upon in a general elections. It is an irony that the Christian communities of East Malaysia can be accepted as *bumiputeras* and the *Sam-sams* communities can have a senator in Parliament, but the Portuguese community is not considered as one and has no political representation. One important factor why the community still survives is because of tourism. The community's uniqueness as the only colonial vestige of the Portuguese era can be seen in its traditions, dances, songs, food and language is indeed an attraction to numerous writers and researchers who highlight this characteristics. The government in realizing the tourist potential has also encouraged the growth of the Portuguese village concept. The yearly *Pesta San*

Pedro where a subsidy is given to organize the week long festival. But for all intents and purposes, this has led to the stereotyping of the community with dance, culture and music. In actual fact, the community has progressed and is represented in most field of occupations. To preserve the Portuguese community, a Ministry of Portuguese Affairs has to be set up running along the same lines as the Ministry of Orang Asli Affairs. Giving partial *bumiputera* status to the Portuguese community is unjust as only the rich will benefit. Equal opportunities in employment, in granting bank loans and in education are also just as important. It would take a long time before the stigma of linking the Portuguese to the sea is forgotten. Alternative forms of employment such as food catering and cottage industries on a commercial basis should be encouraged. Already the Federal Government under the Urban Renewal Scheme has begun the reclamation of a six acres plot which will be converted into a hexagonal plaza of restaurants and souvenir shops and budget hotel will help in providing employment in this hard hit village into a tourist hub.

The Portuguese community has never been a threat to Malaysian society. They have shown their loyalty during the emergency and Japanese occupation. Many had paid the ultimate sacrifice in serving the country. Malaysia is their home and throughout the years they have been loyal citizens. The community is also thankful to Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad for the concern shown in granting to them the right to invest in the ASB. Though we are not full fledged *bumiputeras*, the primary reason for the NEP which is poverty eradication is being fulfilled and the Portuguese will always support the government for its tolerance, without which the Portuguese would never have survived.