

Nation building through the corps

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Article

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ON June 21, two important events took place at two university campuses. At the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia campus, more than 1,000 students were involved in the passing-out parade of the Reserve Officers Training Unit (Pasukan Latihan Pegawai Simpanan — Palapes).

It had been part of the public universities co-curricular activities for more than two decades.

At the Universiti Sains Malaysia campus, the Police Undergraduate Voluntary Corp had its passing-out parade.

More than 600 cadets were involved. The corp, better known as Suksis (Sukarelawan Kor Siswa Siswi) started in the late 1990s.

The voluntary corps is now a co-curricular activity in 12 public universities.

The corps is among the more prominent ones in most campuses. Not only are they distinguished by their impressive uniforms, their discipline is equally impressive.

They never fail to capture the limelight when they proudly display their marching skills at major events at the universities, especially during convocations.

Beyond this, both Palapes and Suksis inculcate patriotism, just like the singing of the Negaraku, reciting the Rukun Negara or waving the Jalur Gemilang.

Their training demands from them compassion for their fellow citizens and they are taught to defend the country's sovereignty and make "real" sacrifices should the need arise.

They are taught how to manage "warfare" and incidences of "civil violence" that may threaten the peace and harmony of the nation. The trainees are also exposed to various types of weapons. They are taught by the "regulars" with wide experience in the military or police force.

The training, which stretches over a three-year period, is intense and challenging, entitling them to join the military or police services without much further training. The country is indeed very proud to know there are still those among our youngsters who are willing to sacrifice their time and possibly lay down their lives so that the rest of us can feel safe and sleep soundly at night.

It is already a tough choice for many of the undergraduates since they are expected to perform well academically. It is discipline that enables them to maintain a fine balance in their endeavours. As a result, they are poised to be better persons, endowed with responsibility towards their motherland and acquiring a variety of soft skills, ranging from the art of grooming to that of fine dining!

We only wish more could benefit from such corps training, then the National Service programme would become redundant!

Despite all the apparent advantages, including being the perfect platform for nation-building, year after year we see the ethnic composition gravitating to just one group.

If excuses like poor remuneration and lack of promotional opportunities, often quoted rightly or wrongly, are given for not joining the regular forces, the same cannot be true for Palapes or Suksis at universities.

Perhaps the National Service, too, would have faced the same fate had it not been made compulsory. What is happening cannot be entirely ignored in the interest of nation-building and unity in diversity.

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