

### Striving to preserve the Eurasian community

So, when she says the Eurasian community in Malaysia is “being wiped out”, you know there is some truth to the statement.

And she is working feverishly to help preserve the history of the community.

The nation’s **Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin** said that based on the 2020 census, there are only 7,487 Eurasians in the country, an increase of 1,102 from the 2010 census.

De Costa disputes those figures as there were as many as 17,000 Eurasians in Singapore in 2012.

For the record, Singapore’s population is one-sixth of Malaysia’s.

“Singapore is tiny compared to Malaysia, yet it had 17,000 Eurasians 10 years ago.

“I have been to Eurasian birthday parties with close to 200 guests, many of whom were unrelated, so I do not believe that there are just over 7,000 of us,” said De Costa.

Adding to De Costa’s suspicion is the fact there is no “ethnicity code” for Eurasian in the national census, but Uzir explained there is a sub-code.

“I called up the Department of Statistics Malaysia in mid-June, and a staff said they did not have the numbers for Eurasians,” said De Costa.

“I thought it was strange as we have been around for hundreds and hundreds of years.

“The staff said we were under ‘dan lain lain’ (others). That total represented less than one per cent of the Malaysian population (0.7 per cent) or about 231,000 people.

“We need to know the numbers. We need to be counted. If you are not counted, people forget you, and it will be difficult to get help.”

Whatever the actual figure, De Costa said it was crucial to record the community’s history.

SFTEA has been around for 122 years but lost its home of 60 years in Jalan Pudu nine years ago.

Since then, De Costa and the rest of the SFTEA community have worked tirelessly to get funds for a new building.

“The government gave us a plot of land in Bangsar Utama after deciding to redevelop the area our clubhouse was on for 60 years,” said De Costa.

“We had a consultation with Kuala Lumpur City Hall. There will be more meetings moving forward.

“We already have a design. We must find a way to raise funds to get the project off the ground. We need at least RM3 million.”

De Costa said the association's new home would be more than a clubhouse, as there are plans to have a museum to trace the community's roots and its contribution to the development of Malaysia.

"We need help and may have to approach a few political parties. After all, many Chinese, Indians and Malays have Eurasian roots," explained De Costa.

"There is a misconception that all Eurasians are Christians. With the mixed marriages through the years, we have Eurasians who are Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims."

De Costa said there is a huge Eurasian community in Sarawak. It is predominantly of British ancestry as opposed to West Malaysia, where the Portuguese bloodline is strongest, followed by the Dutch, English and French, and several others.

To help the Eurasian community feel more welcomed, SFTEA has resumed its famous 'curry lunch' parties on the last Sunday of each month.

"We held our first gathering in April, the first such activity after a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19," said De Costa.

"The most recent event was at the end of June that coincided with the feast of San Pedro (Saint Peter).

"Saint Peter is the patron saint of fishermen. Back then, nearly everyone who stayed in the Portuguese Settlement in Melaka was mostly fishermen.

"It was a big celebration that carries on until today.

"For our curry lunch, my deputy (Anne De Souza) demonstrated a traditional dance – O Mahliao Mahliao. It is a way for the guests to connect to their roots."

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