

Inclusiveness the way forward

► Sense of belonging will prevail if minority groups not marginalised: UPM professor

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians of all races will feel a sense of belonging if their rights are safeguarded and no one is made to feel marginalised and unappreciated.

If every Malaysian were to have a sense of belonging, they would all strive to defend their nation from any threat, regardless of whether they belong to a majority or minority race or live in the peninsula, Sabah or Sarawak.

Prof Dr Jayum Jawan, a professor in politics and government at Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Human Ecology and who is also the university's first appointee to the Tan Sri

Empiang Jabu Research Chair, said to realise this, all ethnic groups must have representation from the grassroots to the highest levels in various fields.

"Opportunities should be given to all races and the distribution of power should be done accordingly. This includes allocating certain (government) posts for representatives of Sabah and Sarawak ethnic groups, in order to involve them in the administration of the nation," he said.

Jayum, who is a Dayak Iban and hails from Sungai Assan in Sibu, Sarawak, said minority groups are not demanding an equal number of seats in Parliament or for all their leaders to be given federal appointments.

"As long as the ethnic groups have their respective representatives (at the federal level), the sense of togetherness will prevail" he said, adding that no minority group should be denied its rights as all are contributing to the

progress and development of the nation.

"Denying them their rights is akin to discrimination, which will only stifle efforts to foster unity in this country's plural society."

Meanwhile, Suney Leo Ertza Neo Sulaiman, who is a member of the Development and Safety Committee (Youth Bureau) at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Kiol in Jerantut, Pahang, said racial stereotyping must stop and so must the use of words or terms deemed derogatory to certain ethnic groups.

Only mutual respect for one another's way of life, culture and language can ensure harmony in a multiracial and multi-religious society, said Suney.

"There are still people who belittle the orang asli for their looks, lack of skills and backwardness. They may say it in jest but such a thing will not happen if mutual respect exists among the races," he said.

Stressing that minority groups also deserve

to enjoy the fruits of the nation's prosperity, he said they should also benefit from infrastructure development such as tarred roads, clean water and electricity supplies and communication networks.

"These are now the basic necessities of life and if we have minorities still demanding for them, then it's time the authorities went on the ground to see how certain ethnic groups live, especially those who live in the interiors."

On the level of patriotism among orang asli, he said they are not only patriotic but respect the Rukun Negara and the way they express their patriotism may be different and the public might find it difficult to understand.

"We hope the government would allocate more reserve land for the orang asli," he said, adding that orang asli and Sabah and Sarawak ethnic communities should be represented in the nation's unity agenda so no one feels left out. - Bernama

'Unity in diversity is our way'

By RENA LIM
and LO TERN CHERN
north@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: With Malaysia Day just around the corner, the people have been urged to appreciate the diversity of each ethnic group in the country.

Student Mandy Song, 21, from Sibu, Sarawak, said Malaysian unity had prevailed this long because everybody respected each other's culture and traditions.

"There is a proverb in Malay 'Bersatu kita teguh, bercerai kita roboh' which means united we stand, divided we fall.

"Thanks to unity, we were able to gain independence and maintain it throughout," she said.

Song said in Miri, a prevalent example was the cooperation and unity between Muslims and Christians displayed when they shared parking lots.

"During prayer time for Muslims on Fridays, the Good Shepherd Church shares its parking lot with Muslim worshippers of the Masjid An Naim.

"On Sundays, the mosque allows churchgoers to use its parking lots.

"This harmonious act was said to have gone on for the past 50 years, and I think this encapsulates the tolerance and unity we have for one another," said Song.

Teacher Doo Siew Wee, 36, from Sarikei, Sarawak, said Malaysians were unique as they were able to live peacefully with one another despite coming from different races, backgrounds and religions.

"To me, unity is when we, who are from different religions and backgrounds, accept and respect one another's religion and have friends from different cultures," she said.

Courier worker Abdul Razak Mohamad Noah, 58, from Johor Baru, said the hard times everyone experienced during the Covid-19



On harmony: Doo said unity meant being able to accept and respect one another and having friends from different cultures.

pandemic brought out the best in people.

"Malaysians are diverse but despite these diversities, we are all able to combat the pandemic together and play our part for the nation's well-being.

"This has enabled Malaysia to be one of the most efficient countries in combating the pandemic, creating a safe and stable environment for people.

"Throughout the movement control order (MCO), we see everyone cooperating.

"As a Malaysian, I am proud of my nation and fellow Malaysians as we did all this together through unity.

"It is as simple as adhering to SOP (standard operating procedure) and taking responsibility to follow rules to ensure each other's safety," he said when met at Penang Hill recently.

Sabahan Niklos Koding, 40, from Kota Kinabalu, said the country's multiculturalism should be embraced through better integration between the peninsula and

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Niklos Koding

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Sabah and Sarawak.

"With technology and improvement in logistics, we can close the gap between the two halves of the country.

"Come and learn about the diverse cultures of others as this will reduce racism and foster unity," he said.

Niklos, who is staying in Kuala Lumpur after living in Penang for 12 years, said he welcomed people to experience the harmonious society in his home state.

"Although I'm a Dusun, everyone lives peacefully together. There is no race that is more superior than the other."

Niklos, who is married to Vanisha Mary, 47, from Pahang, believes that unity must be cultivated from young.

"Children should be taught respect and tolerance which they can practise throughout adulthood," he said.

"The teaching syllabus should include the country as a whole and children of different races should grow up together," he added.