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Panel floats social unity assessment idea

KUANTAN, Mon. - The Government has been urged to introduce a "Social and Unity Impact Assessment" for all development projects to ensure they contribute towards unity.

Under the proposal forwarded by the National Unity Advisory Panel, all development projects must benefit the nation in terms of forging unity among the people.

Similar to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which looks into the potential dangers posed to the environment, the Social Unity Impact Assessment or SUIA is aimed at studying the social and unity impact of a project.

National Unity Advisory Panel member Datuk Lee Lam Thye said all future development projects would have to look into the needs of the people before being implemented.

"The assessment is a way for the Government to study how it (development project) could promote unity. If there are any projects which can raise controversy, it would be best for the project to be reviewed or improved."

Lee added that for a multiracial country like Malaysia there was no other important issue than unity.

"We should remember that we cannot make laws to force the people to be united but that unity must come voluntarily from the bottom of the hearts of all Malaysians, regardless of their race and religion," he said. This is the main reason why the National Unity Advisory Panel is urging the Government to look into the proposal to introduce the SUIA, Lee said.

"Besides this, we do not want to see the Government spending money on development projects that the people are not happy with," he said.

He added if the SUIA was implemented by the Government it would also apply to private development projects.

Lee, who is also the chairman of the Integration and Unity Committee which comes under National Unity Advisory Panel, added that if the Government accepts the proposal, all development projects in the country must be required to get a positive SUIA.

"The leaders in the country including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi have been very aptly mentioning the importance of promoting unity among all the people in the country."

On a related matter, Lee said the responsibility of strengthening unity in the country should not be solely placed on the Government but also on the private sector.

"I would like to urge the private sector to play an active role.

"They can organise activities and programmes involving their staff as this would help create unity among them," he said.

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