

01/10/2001

Promoting Bangsa Malaysia concept

GERAKAN, which believes in a Bangsa Malaysia, will continue to promote and educate the Malaysian public on the concept and its importance.

Its vice-president Datuk Dr S. Vijayaratnam, speaking to reporters, said the idea was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"It is one of the points in Vision 2020, and a concept we hope will be accepted by the multi-racial people of Malaysia," he said.

He said Gerakan and other non-racial parties believe that they have a slight advantage in promoting the concept to Malaysians.

Dr Vijayaratnam said there are still many Malaysians who did not understand the concept.

"Bangsa Malaysia requires people from different races to think of themselves as Malaysians first, before anything else," he said.

He cited the Americans whose citizens comprise various races but regard themselves as Americans first, before anything else.

But they were still fiercely proud of their own cultural identity.

"The concept does not make a person `less' Chinese or Indian or whatever ethnic origin he or she may be," he said.

Vijayaratnam added the idea should not be forced upon the people, and that it needed time to catch on.

"It will need at least another 50 to 100 years for it to be ingrained in our thinking and way of life."

He said there were signs that existing cultures were gradually merging through inter-marriages.

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