

'1Malaysia is better known for products, not unity'

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By Nigel Aw

The government's drive to sell the 1Malaysia concept as a product has caused it to be seen in negative light, said Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) chief executive officer Wan Saiful Wan Jan.

He said the 1Malaysia concept which should have been used for fostering unity, has been reduced to giving handouts.

NONE" That (1Malaysia) is what it has become, a way for the government to give to give bribes to voters, is unfortunate.

"From a concept that could really have been made a positive thing, has turned into a negative.

"It has turned Malaysia into a society dependent on government handouts labelled as 1Malaysia, said Wan Saiful said at the 7th Annual Malaysian Student Leaders Summit today.

Also present at the forum session entitled '1Malaysia: Will Tolerance Suffice for 1Malaysia' were Umno supreme council member Saifuddin Abdullah and Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong.

The government has recently introduced a new slogan, "Endless Possibilities" to complement the 1Malaysia concept.

However, it has also come under criticism after it was discovered that the same slogan was being used by Israel and Mongolia.

'Main issue is quality'

Meanwhile, Saifuddin said Malaysia was in transition to a new phase of democracy where people expect more participation in politics.

"Of course we still need to strengthen democratic institutions. We need to change a lot of things such as the Election Commission (EC) including the chairperson and deputy chairperson," he said. much to the audience's amusement.

NONE When responding to a question on vernacular schools, Saifuddin (right) said a

single stream school for unity may be ideal.

However, he said it was essential that parents had a choice and this is where vernacular schools come in.

"I think the main issue in our education system is not unity, it is quality.

"I would debate education from the quality angle rather than the unity angle because oftentimes when people debate from the unity point of view they miss the point (of education), he said.

He further pointed out that there were some 80,000 non-Chinese students in Chinese schools.

NONE Liew (left) added that instead of thinking about assimilation in schools, the government could consider decentralisation to meet local needs.

"In other countries, primary schools tend to be controlled by city governments, secondary schools by provincial governments and the central government only takes care of the universities," he said.

He added that the government must move beyond the concept of "one language, one culture, one nation".

"I hope one day people will see the Malay language as not only belonging to Malays and the Mandarin language not only belonging to Chinese," he said.

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