

Push for new approach on national unity
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The consensus document from the inaugural Young Malaysians' Roundtable Discussion on National Unity and Development has been handed to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Maximus Ongkili.

Drawn up following the roundtable discussion on April 3, it states that the government's education policies should reflect the reality of Malaysians and their ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

Accepting the document from a delegation at the Parliament lobby today, Maximus said that even though the issues discussed are not new, they have been put together in a coherent manner.

"It talks about the open constructive dialogues. This is a very important aspect because the issues of religious politics affect our nation building," he said.

Maximus, who heads the parliamentary select committee on national unity, said that he would table the document before the committee.

"I also plan to discuss the inputs of the discussion at the next meeting of the National Unity Panel next month," he told reporters.

"Several of the issues are new, especially the views of young Malaysian professionals in cultivating a national identity and their role in the achievement of national unity."

20-point document

The document was handed over by a 10-member delegation comprising representatives of the Centre of Public Policy Studies (CPPS) and the National Young Lawyers Committee (NYLC) which had organised the roundtable discussion.

The NYLC is a component of the Bar Council while the CPPS is a department under influential think-tank Asian Strategic Leadership Institute.

Among the 20 points covered in the document is that national unity should move beyond its "accommodation-ist" approach to one of interaction, and beyond mere tolerance towards a full appreciation, understanding, acceptance and equal treatment of every person regardless of race or religion.

The participants also urged the rejection of ethnic-based politics and race-based ideology in any form.

"We urge key policy makers to take views, perspectives and opinions arising from this roundtable discussion into serious consideration during the formulation of government policies and practices," they said in the document.

They further agreed on the need to forge a Malaysian identity especially among the younger

generation who will be future leaders.

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