

## **Who understands the 1Malaysia concept better?**

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OPINION It was certainly ironical when Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin agreed with former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad that Malaysians have yet to understand the 1Malaysia concept and argued that the public needed more time to fully understand 1Malaysia.

It couldn't have been more apt when the Deputy Prime Minister admitted that "certain groups are "purposely sabotaging the 1Malaysia concept".

There is probably at present, no bigger saboteur of the 1Malaysia concept than Muhyiddin himself for he had sought to expound a completely different interpretation of 1Malaysia compared to the official definition provided by the Government in the official documents.

While the Government Transformation Programme approved by the Cabinet and published in December last year defined the goal of 1Malaysia as "a nation where, it is hoped, every Malaysian perceives himself or herself as Malaysian first, and by race, religion, geographical region or socio-economic background second". It was a definition which was clear and concise.

However, despite the above, the Deputy Prime Minister had chosen to reject the goal of 1Malaysia, by insisting that he is "Malay first" and subsequently ridiculing the concept of "Malaysian first" by saying "How can I say I'm Malaysian first and Malay second? All the Malays will shun me... and it's not proper."

The impact of Muhyiddin's contempt for the Malaysian first concept as defined by the Government sounded the death knell for a unifying "1Malaysia" and is best epitomised by the complete refusal till today for the President of Gerakan, Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon, who is also the Minister in-charge of the Government Transformation Programme, as well as the President of MCA, Datuk Seri Chua Soi Lek, to declare themselves "Malaysian first".

It is hence completely unsurprising that Malaysians fail to understand the concept of 1Malaysia, and Mahathir had lamented that the concept is interpreted differently by different people.

The Deputy Prime Minister's strident support for "ketuanan Melayu" as being a pillar for 1Malaysia and the complicit and complete acquiesce of Barisan Nasional component parties, MCA, MIC and Gerakan to UMNO's demands ensures that there will be no chance of a "Malaysian first" goal of being achieved.

For example, despite an initial attempt by MCA to defend the rights of Christians to use the term "Allah" in their prayers, the MCA President wasted no time backing down from its initial position once MCA received a rebuke and warning from the Deputy Prime Minister.

Instead of fighting for an inclusive "1Malaysia" which took into consideration the rights and interests of all Malaysians, Chua changed the party's position, claiming that they were "merely echoing the wishes of non-governmental organisation Christian Federation of Malaysia". This is to say that MCA themselves have no opinions or position about the issue.

Hence, Muhyiddin has no one else to blame but himself for disparaging the initially noble concept of "1Malaysia" by failing to take into consideration the rights and interest of all

Malaysians.

The non-UMNO Barisan Nasional component parties, on the other hand, perpetuate the failure by refusing to take a position in the interest of all Malaysians, by refusing to challenge Umno, even if the latter is acting against the official government policy or the interest of all Malaysians at large.

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