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Merdeka Statement for national identity

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PETALING JAYA: An eight-point Merdeka Statement was launched yesterday aimed at cultivating a national identity that recognises and celebrates Malaysia's diversity.

They are: Strengthening national unity; enhancing international competitiveness; creating an innovation economy; redressing imbalances; reinforcing institutions; reforming education; ensuring quality of life; and improving gover-

nance, fighting corruption.

The statement, themed "Towards 2020: Working together for a more united, competitive, innovative and prosperous Malaysia", was launched by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

"As we celebrate our golden jubilee, it is high time for reflection on our history and work collectively towards a more united, competitive, innovative and prosperous nation."

He also called on Malaysians

to support the continuous partnership between the government, businesses and society for a renewed determination to work for the betterment of its people and the commitment to a new Malaysian agenda.

The launch was organised by the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS), which is part of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli).

Asli president Mirzan Mahathir said the onus was on the people to shape the country they lived in.

"We cannot deny there is obvious progress and development the last 50 years. We have done extremely well in the eyes of the world. But the world is moving rapidly and we should not rest on our laurels. Can we rise and meet the challenges ahead?"

CPPS chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam said it was easier to criticise negatively and comment on weaknesses. "Often, we say a glass is half empty but not half full. We must be able to address our shortcomings positively."