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Making a statement on national identity

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PETALING JAYA: "Weaning off" dependency on government aid, pushing for automatic voter registration at age 21 and testing all new policies against the tenets of the Federal Constitution and Rukunegara were among the points contained in the recently drawn up Merdeka Statement.

Launched yesterday by Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (Asli) president Mirzan Mahathir, the statement contains eight points, which strives to form a national identity by recognising and celebrating the country's diversity.

They are strengthening national unity, enhancing international competitiveness, creating an innovation-based economy, redressing imbalances, reinforcing institutions, reforming education, ensuring quality of life,

and improving governance and fighting corruption.

Mirzan said that the "living document" was designed to move with the times.

"It is important that after 50 years of independence to set out what are the feeling and challenges, and what we need to do," he said yesterday after the launch, which was also attended by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

Mirzan added that the Merdeka Statement took about five months to be written and the task was undertaken by the institute's Centre for Public Policy Studies (CCPS) and about 40 non-governmental organisations.

Copies of the statement are available from CCPS and can be viewed on its website www.cpps.org.my.