

# Code for politicians

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Parliamentary Select Committee on National Unity and National Service is to formulate a code of ethics to stop politicians from using racial issues for political mileage.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili, who chairs the committee, said this is one of eight recommendations pertaining to the conduct of all politicians.

These are among more than 100 recommendations on national unity which the committee had compiled into a report and tabled in Parliament in May.

The committee, whose two-year tenure ends on Dec 31, came up with the

recommendations on the conduct of politicians after gleaning feedback from public

hearings, when it was pointed out that politicians were the ones who brought up racial issues to gain political mileage.

"The code will include a guide on the politicians' conduct and practice as a way to prevent politicians from using racial issues as a political platform.

"The committee will meet in August to form a team to draft the code," Ongkili said yesterday after opening a two-day national seminar themed "50 years of independence and the new generation: The future of multi-ethnic relations in Malaysia".

He said the code is expected to be drafted in three months for presentation to Parliament. The code should apply to elected representatives and political leaders,

and not just during election season or general assemblies but at all times.

Asked if politicians are wont to bring up racial issues, Ongkili said: "There are tendencies during elections and party general assemblies because the leaders are responding to questions or issues raised by the delegates."

He said although there is tendency to bring up racial issues in such circumstances, he is confident that Barisan Nasional leaders can advise and guide their respective party members in compliance with a protocol against stirring up racial tension.

Ongkili said the National Unity and Integration Department is also working with the Education and Higher Education Ministries on the

possibility of introducing a Rukun Negara module in schools and institutions of higher learning.

"It is not enough to just memorise the five principles of the Rukun Negara from the back cover of the exercise book," he said, adding that students need to grasp the history, meaning and implications of these principles in their daily lives.

Earlier in his speech, Ongkili said dialogue plays a crucial role in the

inter-racial collaboration that is needed for the country to attain independence.

"Before Merdeka, dialogue between the leaders of the different communities played an important role to forge a social contract, whereby citizenship was extended to the communities who had settled in the country while the Malays/bumiputra are given a special position."

He said the

challenges that Malaysian society today continues to face, in achieving national unity, include religious issues, especially those involving conversion; economic disparity between the communities; and the special position of the Malays.

He said it is important society is aware of and appreciates how the social contract was formed and why there certain communities need to be given privileges.

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