

**Media's Role In Moving 1Malaysia Called Crucial
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 (Bernama) -- The slogan '1Malaysia' is among the most frequently mentioned by the Malaysian public from Perlis to Sabah.

The public awareness of the concept, which is the brain child of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, is far reaching and appeals to all ethnic communities in the country.

No doubt, due to the high level of the public's grasp of the concept, the 1Malaysia slogan has managed to cement unity and solidarity among Malaysia's pluralistic society.

Further, a study of the 1Malaysia slogan revealed that society's understanding of the concept reached 86.3 per cent last year, which signifies the overwhelming response towards it by Malaysians of various ethnic groups.

Information Communication and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the statistics were obtained from a survey conducted on 22,541 respondents from various ethnic groups nationwide.

The statistics on society's acceptance level exceeded by 1.3 per cent that of the ministry's Key Performance Index (KPI) of 85 per cent.

The study on Society's Acceptance and Practice of the 1Malaysia Concept 2011 was conducted by the ministry's Research Division, Information Department, Special Affairs Department (JASA), as well as the National Arts and Culture Department (JKKN).

It now appears that the 1Malaysia concept, three years after its introduction by the government, is now on a firm platform to act as the pillar in guiding Malaysia towards achieving developed nation status by 2020.

1MALAYSIA OBJECTIVE

The concept of 1Malaysia aims to enhance inter-racial relations among all Malaysian as a weapon to face future challenges and threats.

The complete scrutiny of the concept indicates that 1Malaysia is able to shape Malaysia into a more peaceful, stable and developed nation in all fields, apart from gaining respect from the rest of the world.

The prime minister wants all Malaysians to be able to stand, act and think as one Malaysian race and base their actions on the interest of all ethnic groups.

The 1Malaysia concept demands all leaders and people play their respective role along the principle of "People First, Performance Now".

The 1Malaysia concept also demands the public be more open-minded, as well as think and act beyond their respective ethnic boundaries.

How far the concept will bring the nation depends upon the level of its acceptance and understanding among the public.

MEDIA'S ROLE

To enrich the spirit of 1Malaysia, the collaboration from all parties, including the media, is required in order for the unity message to reach all, including those living in rural areas.

However, more is required from the media, particularly the alternative media, in disseminating this message more aggressively to the people, said Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Modern Language and Communication Faculty Dean Prof Madya Dr Abdul Mua'ti@Zamri Ahmad in an interview with Bernama here recently.

"A survey conducted by the faculty over the role of the media in disseminating the message about the 1Malaysia concept reveals that more exposure is needed on the government's effort to fully convey the message to all Malaysians," the academician said.

The survey, conducted among 500 respondents in the Klang Valley, which forms part of the three-phase study, indicates that that understanding among the people about the concept is still moderate.

"The 1Malaysia concept is good as its objective is to unite Malaysians from all ethnic groups and religions, without any suspicion and animosity, to join hands in bringing progress to the country," he explained.

Dr Abdul Mua'ti said the survey shows that the respondents, many of whom were ages 26 to 35 years old from various backgrounds are receptive to the 1Malaysia concept.

"The respondents include 50 per cent men, where 48 per cent are Malays, Chinese (36 per cent), Indians (17 per cent), and others (0.6 per cent).

"The bottom line is that the higher the level in understanding the 1Malaysia concept, the easier it will be for society to be receptive to it," he said.

POSITIVE PERCEPTION IN SABAH AND SARAWAK

The findings are further strengthened via a study conducted by Universiti Malaya (UM) on the views of the public on the prime minister's initiative, where people begin to understand more about the concept of 1Malaysia to further enhance national unity.

The study was conducted by UM's International Institute Of Public policy and Management on 2,490 respondents, comprising 2,032 Malays, 189 Chinese, 123 Sabah and Sarawak ethnic people, as well as 80 Indians.

The outcome shows that the perception and acceptance of the concept is high among the Bumiputera of Sabah and Sarawak.

Even though the number of respondents in Sabah and Sarawak is small, the level of their understanding of the concept is high.

The study also shows that women respondents (83 per cent) are more optimistic and receptive to the concept, as compared to their male counterparts (at 75 per cent).

The outcome of the UM study is not far from that conducted by UPM, which shows that women respondents are more receptive to 1Malaysia and share the opinion that the concept

is worthwhile in its uniting all Malaysians.

Dr Abdul Mua'ti said in terms of age, those above 45 years old are open, as well as have a high understanding and appreciation of the concept.

"This age group is willing to grasp the concept, as they may have experienced the years after independence as well as the time after the 13th May episode.

"This makes their thinking to be receptive towards inter-racial relationships," he said, adding that for the younger generation, the effort should be made more serious through various media.

DIFFERENCE IN UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE ETHNIC GROUPS

Malaysia is an example of a unique nation that is able to maintain peace and prosperity among ethnic groups of different cultures and religions.

Based on this principle, the 1Malaysia concept is the best approach for the building and cementing of relations among the various ethnic groups in the country.

Dr Abdul Mua'ti said the understanding about the concept should be further improved among the various ethnic groups.

He said both studies conducted by UM and UPM indicate that the Malays' acceptance and appreciation of this concept is high.

VARIES THE EXPOSURE BY MEDIA

Dr Abdul Mua'ti said the media is the most important tool to relay information to the people, including on government policies.

He added that the relaying of information to the public via television is more effective, when compared to other forms of media.

The academician further said the survey reveals that most of the respondents obtained information about 1Malaysia through news, shown on television.

"The influence (of television) is formidable and the ethnic communities like Malays, Chinese and Indians, have their own preferred channels.

"Our newspapers are also based on these communities. The Malay papers, (will talk about) Malay issues while the Chinese dailies (are concerned about) Chinese issues, and it is the same with the Indians.

"There is no meeting point where the issues concerning Malaysians are really discussed," he said.

The associate professor also notes that there are not many local movies and dramas that showed interracial unity, where this is the creative and simple way of relaying the message.

He cited movies made by the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee, such as Sarjan Hasan, Sesudah Subuh and Gerimis, that attracted viewers from various communities.

"Nowadays, Malay producers only make Malay movies and the same happens with Chinese movie makers who focus only on the Chinese community.

"Only lately, there is an attempt to make some changes by including all ethnic communities by movie directors like Mamat Khalid (Estet) and the late Yasmin Ahmad (Sepet)," he said.

MORE SERIOUS EFFORT

Looking back on life in the 1970s, Dr Abdul Mua'ti said society in those days was more sensitive and respectful of other races, without any prejudices.

But where had this respect and acceptance, which should have been stronger by now, gone?, he asked

"My school was Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid, Kedah. My good friends were Chinese, Indians and Siamese. They came to my house, slept there while I too went to their homes. When I went to their homes, they tied their dogs in the backyard since they respected my sensitivity.

"When it came to food, they knew what I could and what I could not eat. When I performed my prayers, my friend would wait for me at the surau steps until I finished. But the present day generation is not like the generations before, where each of them is now showing importance to their own interest.

"This is so since the spirit of unity has not been inculcated into them since they were small.

"Today we like to exaggerate small issues, are not sensitive towards each other and are losing the respect of others," he said.

The academician calls for the government and opposition to be sincere in conveying the unity message across society by utilising the media for the people's benefit.

"It should be translated into the form of action, as we do not wish to talk about 1Malaysia but, at the same time, there are those who want to champion the interests of their people.

"So, there is media that talks about the issue of unity but, at the same time, publishes news and issues that focus on the opposite (of the concept).

"This will confuse people and not be in line with the concept's meaning and goal." he added.

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