

**Malaysia Needs New Politics For Progressive Democracy, Says Saifuddin  
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By Neville D'Cruz**

MELBOURNE, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah has called for a "New Politics" as "a path for a better Malaysia".

He said a new political approach would lead to a culture of politics that would achieve a "healthier, cleaner, mature and progressive democracy".

Saifuddin was speaking at a "Human Capital Development" seminar organised by the Melbourne Umno Club at the University of Melbourne here on Thursday, attended by more than 200 students, academics and the Malaysian Consul General here Dr Mohd Rameez Yahaya.

Saifuddin said "New Politics", which comprised four areas, was about bringing "our political discourse to a higher level".

To achieve this, there was a need for political integrity, he said.

"Politics should be based on idealism, activism and intellectualism, not personal/vested interest," Saifuddin said.

"We should implement knowledge politics, wisdom politics and service politics."

Saifuddin said the second area was in a new governance framework.

"This area has the three sectors in which state, business and civil society worked hand in hand in a genuine partnership in decision-making structures and process in every area of nation-building and at every level -- from the grassroots to Putrajaya," he said.

Saifuddin called the third area "innovations in democracy".

"We should create new platforms and approaches for greater people participation in decision-making," he said.

"Issues include lowering the age of voting to 18, automatic registration of voters, election of local councils and reform of the Dewan Negara (senate)."

He said progressive political thoughts should bring up the quartet.

"We need more and deeper thoughts in decision-making.

"We need to come up with better ideas and programmes to develop a better society that is based on faith in God, knowledge culture, civilisation, economic growth and equity, social inclusion and sustainable development," he said.

He told his enthusiastic young listeners that youth always wanted change in most aspects of life, but they must achieve change with due process.

Saifuddin's speech and the Q & A that followed were well-received and impressed the students, with one suggesting that he should aspire to be prime minister. "I am not that ambitious," he said to the audible disappointment of the students.

The Mufti of Perlis, Dr Juanda Jaya, told the students that living overseas did not prevent them from mixing with non-Muslims and joining them in celebrations.

He said they could join in celebrating other religious occasions like Christmas, Deepavali and Chinese New Year as long as they observed "halal" and "haram".

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