

1Malaysia National Seminar

Unity in Diversity: Sharing Our Similarities, Celebrating Our Differences

In a premeditated effort to raise awareness of our joint responsibility for advancing the concept of 1Malaysia, PPIB took the initiative to host a national seminar to deliberate how best to achieve the specific objectives of 1Malaysia, as outlined by the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia, the Right Honourable Datuk Seri Mohamed Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak.

The 1Malaysia National Seminar, with its theme "1Malaysia, Shared Reality", was held on 1-2 November, 2010. It provided a platform for 105 academicians, researchers, representatives from statutory bodies, private agencies, and non-governmental organisations to articulate their views on 1Malaysia and its realisation. The seminar was officiated by the honourable Brig. Gen. Prof. Datuk Seri Panglima Dr. Kamaruzaman Haji Ampon, the Vice Chancellor of UMS. The programme included a forum, a keynote address, and five parallel sessions.

The highlight of this seminar was a lively two-hour forum entitled *Gagasan 1Malaysia: Antara Retorik dan Realiti* (1Malaysia: Between Rhetoric and Reality). It was chaired by Emeritus Prof. Dr. Ahmat Adam, a fellow researcher from the History Department of Universiti Malaya. The four panelists included Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Dr. Herman Luping (former Deputy Chief Minister of Sabah), Prof. Datuk Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (Director, Institute of Ethnic Studies or KITA, UKM), Prof. Dr. Teo Kok Seong (ATMA, UKM), and Dr. Kntayya Mariappan (SSS, UMS). Each of the panelists approached the concept of 1Malaysia critically from their fields of expertise (principally history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics and ethnic relations). Furthermore, they rationalised their positions on the issues and elaborated the means to achieve the aims of 1Malaysia with real life illustrations.

The honourable Prof. Dato' Dr. Ismail Hj. Ibrahim (Acting Chair of Syekh Abdullah Fahim Institut Islam Hadhari, UKM and Trustee of the 1Malaysia Foundation) presented an Islamic perspective on the issues during his keynote address entitled *1Malaysia: Islam dalam Perlembagaan dan Amalan* (1Malaysia: Islam in the Constitution and Practice). He outlined the obstacles to unification - and the means to overcome them - to an attentive audience comprising about 150 UMS students.

Sessions ran concurrently in six lecture halls and by the end of the two days a total of 84 papers had been presented by academicians from local public or private institutions of higher education. The five sub-themes for the parallel sessions were ethnicity and politics; language, literature, and culture; education and media; religion; and a general category. Among the presenters were two Indonesians from a local institute of higher education. They compared the concept of 1Malaysia with the process and experience of nation building in Indonesia.

This insightful seminar was organised by PPIB's Research and Innovation Unit headed by Dr. Lai Yew Meng, advised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andreas Totu and assisted by a dedicated team of academic and administrative staff. The high level of commitment to the project was evident at the planning stage and throughout the seminar ("Syabas! PPIB boleh!" was the call to arms). Despite the dedication of the PPIB team, it should not be forgotten that the event would not have been possible without the support of UMS and a host of generous sponsors.

