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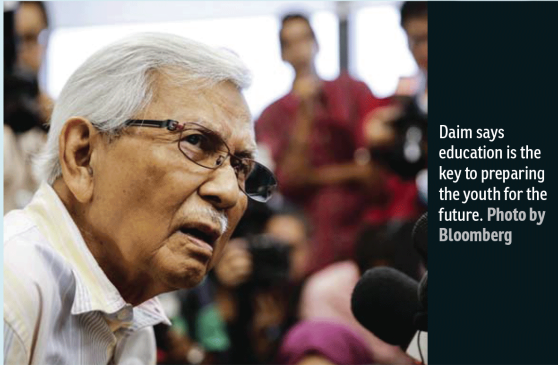
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# Daim: Malaysia far from being able to compete globally

Education ministry has failed to prioritise the right issues to tackle



Daim says education is the key to preparing the youth for the future. Photo by Bloomberg

## STORIES BY EMIR ZAINUL

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is still far from reaching the status of a developed country with a unified citizen that is ready to face the industrial challenges of the future, said Council of Eminent Persons chairman Tun Daim Zainuddin.

Daim said Malaysia is still playing catch up with the fourth industrial revolution when other countries are already gearing for the supposed fifth industrial revolution.

"Let us not be under any illusions. We are still far from being out of the woods. We are far from being ready for the changes happening around us.

"We are far from being a united people. We are far from being able to compete at the global level. We are far from being able to embrace differences and changes.

"And underpinning all of this unpreparedness is education," he said at the launch of the International Conference on Emerging Issues in Public Policy at Universiti Malaya's Institute of Public Policy and Management.

The former finance minister pointed out that education is the key to preparing the youth for the future. However, he said the education ministry has failed to prioritise the right issues to tackle, which has hindered the progress of reforms within the national education policy.

"We are still arguing over

whether we should teach Maths and Science in English, when the rest of the world has embarked on advanced curriculums that focus on Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4) so as to make their youth more competitive and relevant in a world that is going to be dominated by artificial intelligence and robotics," he said.

"To participate in IR4, we must go through a knowledge-based economy and here Malaysia has failed because the government, through the ministry of education, has not got its priorities right. The education ministry must not fail our nation.

"While we are still mired in the political rhetoric of languages, others around us have moved beyond English or Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia into the language of programming and coding. When will we realise just how far behind we are and lacking?" Daim added.

In facing the rise of technology in industrialisation, Daim said the government should implement policies that create an environment where people are allowed to maximise their potential and pursue creative pursuits that are complemented by technology, not replaced by it.

The reality is, he said, technology will have the most impact on future employment as robots replace humans in menial tasks. But where one window closes, another opens, he added.

"Fields such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Robotics, Supply Chain Logistics, and Smart Man-

ufacturing need skilled workers and indeed, the World Economic Forum has estimated that 133 million jobs will emerge as technology advances," he said.

At the same time, Daim stressed that education is not just for skills

## NEP should move from race-based to needs-based — Daim

KUALA LUMPUR: The New Economic Policy (NEP) should evolve into a national development policy that is focused on a needs-based approach as opposed to race-based, said Council of Eminent Persons chairman Tun Daim Zainuddin.

The former finance minister pointed out that although the NEP, which was first enforced nearly 50 years ago, has had its successes, the policy has been rife with shortcomings and abuses.

Speaking at the International Conference on Emerging Issues in Public Policy at Universiti Malaya's Institute of Public Policy and Management yesterday, Daim noted that bumiputera-based affirmative policies stemmed from the fact that the community remained among the poorest in Malaysia.

But he acknowledged that the bumiputera agenda, after being implemented all these years, has not quite achieved its intended target.

"It is time for a new approach, to start afresh and truly change the lives of those among us who are not reaping the rewards of national development. The difference is that we must now target those among the rakyat who need assistance the most.

"We can no longer allow bumiputera interventions to continue to enrich those among us who have benefited from these policies, yet continue to take advantage of loopholes in the policies, to continue enriching themselves at the expense of those who need help," he said.

"We must also acknowledge that although bumiputeras are indeed disproportionately rep-

resented among the poor, other races too are deeply affected by poverty and low standards of living," he added.

Daim also alluded to the fact that there are segments within the society who have not benefited and not had their fair share to participate in national growth and development. If the issue is not addressed, he said issues of inequalities will be worse for the country.

He said if people continue to resist changes, they will pay the price as there are still pockets of abject poverty such as the orang asli who serve as a reminder of the indecent wealth disparity in the country.

"The disparity in modern infrastructure and amenities between regions is like night and day, and the educational opportunities available to the haves and have nots ensure that such income and standard of living gaps will continue to widen, if something is not done to rectify them," he said.

Daim stressed that unpopular changes proposed by the new government has caused distress among those who would lose the most, and thus in order to protect their own selfish interests, he said the parties have resorted to playing the race and religious cards.

"We need to question why certain quarters are afraid of these changes and more importantly, we need to question how is it that they managed to rally support for their rhetoric and hate campaigns?

"Do we gain anything by teaching the young that they have the right of entitlement over all others simply because of their race? Is it right to be instilling in students

the thinking that all other religions are inferior to yours?" he questioned.

On this, Daim affirmed that the bumiputeras still stand to benefit the most if the NEP moves from a race-based approach to one that is focused on needs-based. He said any policy must result in justice for all.

"We have been robbing the poor to further uplift those that don't deserve the support, and this widening of the education and income gap must come to an end. The fear-mongering is only to encourage and continue this abuse. It is time to stop the "them versus us" rhetoric," he said.

"Policy-wise, the B40, irrespective of race, must be given priority. We must ensure that they can sustain their livelihood and continue to contribute to the national economy. As the majority among the B40 group, bumiputeras will still stand to benefit the most. Those who don't deserve assistance will not get it. And this should be the case.

"The new NEP must take this into consideration and approach the bumiputera dilemma with a fresh perspective, to ensure that all Malaysians can have their fair share of our national prosperity," Daim added.

The original NEP was first introduced by the late second prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak, in 1971 in response to the racial riots of May 13, 1969 which was deemed to have been caused largely by socio-economic imbalances within the Malaysian society. At the time, the NEP was conceived to reduce ethnic inequalities and to eradicate poverty, irrespective of race.

development, but it is also for the soul. He said the values, that are instilled in the youth at home and at the school level, will greatly impact on the type of adults they evolve into.

"We must empower them with

the ability to think critically, logically, wisely and to make their own informed decisions, no matter the situation. We must raise a new generation of leaders and great thinkers, not of sheep and cowards," he said.

## Petronas says no intention of buying India's Bina oil refinery stake

### BY CHONG JIN HUN

KUALA LUMPUR: Petrolim Nasional Bhd (Petronas) said yesterday it has no intention of acquiring any stake in India's Bina oil refinery although India is an important market for the

Malaysian national oil company. "Petronas refers to the report by Reuters published last Monday titled 'Petronas, Japan's JXTG may buy stake in India's Bina oil refinery.' "While India remains a key market for Petronas, we have no intention

of acquiring any stake in the said refinery," Petronas said in a brief statement yesterday.

Last Monday Reuters, quoted a source close to the matter, reported that Petronas and a consortium led by Japan's JXTG Holdings Inc were

among the companies interested in buying a stake in India's Bina oil refinery.

It was reported that the Bina plant in central India, capable of processing 156,000 barrels per day of crude oil, is operated by Bharat Oman Refineries

Ltd, a 50-50 joint venture between Oman Oil Co and state-run Bharat Petroleum Corp (BPCL).

"There are a new set of companies who have approached BPCL for a stake in its Bina refinery," the source was quoted as saying.