

Fresh approach to **race** relations

Council set up to work towards national reconciliation and racial unity

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PUTRAJAYA: The formation of the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) to be announced this Monday will mark the first step taken by politicians from both sides of the political divide to work together towards national reconciliation and racial unity.

The setting up of the council comes on the heels of the recent 13th General Election and several racially charged issues following it, prompting the Government to look

for a fresh approach in addressing race relations and nation building.

Minister in the Prime Minister Department Tan Sri Joseph Kurup (*pic*) said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will announce the names of those appointed to sit on the 32-member council.

"The formation of the council was deemed necessary as the former National Unity Advisory Panel, which was formed under the emergency ordinances, ceased to function fol-



lowing their repeal.

"Also the Government wanted a new approach in addressing national unity and nation building in line with the changes affecting the respective communities," he told *The Star* yesterday.

He said seven workshops and seminars were held between stakeholders and Universiti Putra Malaysia since May this year to vet the right candidates for the council.

"The aim was to make the council as inclusive as possible. Members

are made up of open-minded individuals who will be able to come out with practical approaches to strengthen national unity and harmony," he said.

Besides members from both the ruling Barisan Nasional and the opposition including those from Sabah and Sarawak, there will also be representatives from the corporate sector, youth and related non-governmental organisations.

Kurup, who is minister in charge of unity, however, refused to divulge the names of the individuals involved, saying it would be

announced by Najib.

He, however, hinted that there might be several "surprise" names included.

He said that five working sub-committees, comprising 12 members each, would be formed under the council to address specific issues.

"One of the first things that the council will do is to work on drafting the National Unity Blueprint early next year.

"The blueprint will be the basis of the Government's national unity and harmony policies," he said.