

'THINK TANKING' VITAL FOR NATION

MUCH has happened since the 14th General Election (GE14). Many are waiting to see how Pakatan Harapan's election promises will be delivered.

One interesting initiative is the establishment of the Council of Eminent Persons.

The members are made up of prominent Malaysians, who are experts and have served the country.

The council will provide input on the economy, institutional reforms and other policy matters.

Although many professionals have retired, the nation can tap their experience. It would be a waste if their knowledge and expertise were not used.

The council is one platform where these professionals can contribute to the country.

There are a number of think tanks. Some are established by universities, while others are initiated by non-governmental organisations.

The Institute of Strategic and International Studies must count among the more established ones.

The Academy of Sciences Malaysia, established more than 20 years ago, has earned itself a name as a leading advisory group on science.

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs also has



Tun Daim Zainuddin heads the Council of Eminent Persons, which will provide input on the economy, institutional reforms and other policy matters. FILE PIC

made its presence felt.

In many countries, think tanks are valued as a source of ideas that can be harnessed to support nation building.

Ideas can include strategies on boosting the economy, policies to motivate science and innovation, and policies on sustaining social integration.

But they can be useful only if

they are independent, objective and above politics.

Their views should not be silenced just because they do not agree with the mainstream views.

Great ideas of the past are rooted in dissenting views. This is what critical thinking is about. Such thinking should be nurtured at an early age in the ed-

ucation system. The school curriculum should consider incorporating "think tanking" lessons for students.

The nation is entering a new era. For the academic community, the most welcome news is the promise by the government to revive academic freedom in universities.

There are signs that the Uni-

versities and University Colleges Act 1971 will most likely be done away with. If not completely, at least parts of the act that stifle freedom of expression will be removed.

Many agree that research and development (R&D) is a critical investment in the innovation-led global economy.

R&D is not only for the development of knowledge to invent technologies and products. It is also for the development of knowledge to support policy formulation.

Think tanks can be considered as institutions that conduct research to contribute to policy-making.

This means "think tanking" is an important investment for the country.

Many are relieved that the new administration is undoing rules that suppressed the freedom to communicate ideas.

Freedom of expression is seen by many as a major breakthrough, which can contribute towards nation building.

Think tanks should be tapped as important sources of ideas. They should be allowed to speak without fear or favour.

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