Representations of inclusiveness in social assistance programmes of the 10th Malaysia Plan, 2011–2015

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To cite this article: Mary Varghese & Edmund Terence Gomez (2018): Representations of inclusiveness in social assistance programmes of the 10th Malaysia Plan, 2011–2015, National Identities, DOI: 10.1080/14608944.2018.1463515

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2018.1463515

Published online: 17 May 2018.

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ABSTRACT
This article appraises constructions of inclusiveness in social assistance programmes in the Malaysian socioeconomic agenda of the 10th Malaysia Plan, 2011–2015 (10MP). Setting as context the needs-based aspirational inclusiveness articulated in documents preceding the 10MP, this study adopts a discursive approach to probe the realisations of such inclusiveness in the 10MP. The analysis reveals essentialised ethnic constructions of different communities and their needs, as well as differing degrees of commitment in initiatives proposed, thereby indicating the slippage in discourse between the aspirations of inclusiveness and their realisations in actual initiatives in the 10MP.

KEYWORDS
10th Malaysia Plan; inclusiveness; social assistance programmes; 1Malaysia; discursive approach; social actors; predication

Introduction
This article examines the representation of the discourse of inclusiveness within the context of 1Malaysia as articulated in the nation’s 5-year socioeconomic agenda, the 10th Malaysia Plan, 2011–2015 (10MP), overseen by the current Prime Minister, Najib Razak. The Prime Minister’s ruling coalition has held power in Malaysia since independence, initially as the Alliance, and then as Barisan Nasional (BN) after the ethnic riots of 1969. In Malaysia, issues of inclusiveness have been closely linked to the socioeconomic agenda of the country, as with the 2nd Malaysia Plan, 1971–1975 (2MP), which introduced ethnicised affirmative action policies in the aftermath of the riots. It is also important to note that the 10MP materialised at a critical discourse moment (Chilton, 1987; Petersoo, 2007) after the 2008 General Elections when the BN was returned to power but lost its two-thirds majority for the first time.

The outcome of the 2008 Malaysian General Elections appeared to signal an ideological divide between state and society regarding BN policies, including its race-based policies. Initial documents, such as the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the New Economic Model (NEM), as well as statements from the Najib administration indicated moves to accommodate this shift and to thereby close the gap. This article, therefore, asks if the socioeconomic agenda of the 10MP (1) maintained the discourse of multiethnic inclusiveness signalled in these early policy documents that preceded it; (2) took on board contemporary social and economic realities in shaping such an identity. Linking the notion