

Anti-apostasy rally in Penang draws 2,000

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The Himpun rally organised by a group of Muslim NGOs kicked off in Kepala Batas today with religious musical performances, building the momentum for the expected fiery speeches by several controversial leaders.

The performances were delivered in a number of languages - Malay, English and a bit of Tamil and Thai as well.

himpun rally in penang crowdBy 10.30am, about 2,000 people have gathered at Dewan Budi Penyayang community hall for the three-hour event - men on the right and women on the left of the stage.

The mood was festive as there were several stalls selling food and drinks and Muslim paraphernalia outside the hall, where many youths were drawn to a career-and-book exhibition.

The rally is supposed to attract 20,000 people from all over Penang and Kedah, however only a fraction has turned up so far.

hafiz nordin (left hand in white) himpun rally in penangSeveral speakers including former Penang PAS Youth chief Hafiz Noordin (seated left in photo), Teras president Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid, Islamic Propagation and Outreach Society leader Kamaruddin Abdullah and Himpun deputy organiser Abdullah Zaid enthralled the crowd with their rousing speeches.

The summary of all the speeches boiled down to the concern of the Muslims towards threats of apostasy, the weakness of the community's faith and efforts to defend Islam.

Hasan Ali, the former Selangor executive councillor who was recently sacked from PAS, was the last speaker at the event.

himpun in penang azhar ibrahim among the crowdHe made a fuss about the number of participants reported by Malaysiakini for today's event, saying the audience numbered at least 3,000, with several Umno assemblypersons including state opposition leader Azhar Ibrahim (centre in photo) among the crowd.

He chastised the media for often giving the wrong impression about the number of participants at the Himpun rallies, saying that the one held in Shah Alam was attended by at least 25,000 people and not 5,000 as reported.

It is learnt that PAS has advised its members not to attend the event as rival party Umno is behind it, he added.

"Who are the Umno leaders on stage here? I find it strange as they have been calling for the whole world to turn up at the recent High Court decision on opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy II trial in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

"Where is the logic in this?" he stormed, raising his voice.

himpun rally in penang hasan aliHasan (left) then launched into a lamentation of why he was sacked from PAS, saying it was because of his hardline approach to defend Islam and the Muslim community.

"I was sacked not because I was corrupt or involved in criminal breach of trust, neither was I sexually

involved in gay activities or have committed any crime that is against the law," he complained.

The nationwide Himpun rally - first held in Selangor in October last year - is to protest against the alleged threat of apostasy and Christianisation among the Muslim community, which the leaders claim are currently running rampant in the country.

The Penang state government has distanced itself from the event, saying that it neither endorses the rally nor would participate in it.

Hasan: Apostasy cases are rampant

Meanwhile, Hasan mocked PAS for continuously denying that apostasy cases are rampant in the country.

himpun rally in penang performancesHe added that before he was sacked from his state exco position, he had set up a 'Unit Selamatkan Akidah (USA)' or faith rescue unit which has registered about 60 cases of apostasy.

He related stories about how individuals or couples who were Christianised had been lured by money, including given gifts of laptops, cameras, cars, monthly food provisions and gadgets like solar-powered Bibles to help them in their faith.

"I was told these international Christian groups have unlimited funds," he told the attentive crowd.

"There had also been reports that these foreign Christian ministers have resorted to acting, by wearing Muslim skullcaps and attending prayers at a certain mosque in Petaling Jaya to establish a communal relationship with Muslims before converting them," he claimed.

At the end of his 45-minute speech, Hasan said Muslims in the country were vulnerable, due to their lack of and weakened faith which leads to the worsening apostasy situation among the community, urging them to return to the true teachings of Islam.

He then ended his session by praying along with the audience, who were seen clasping their hands in serious prayer, with some becoming emotional, and wiping tears from their eyes.

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