

## **Minister: Zero tolerance on religious bigotry**

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**By Nigel Aw**

The government has taken a zero tolerance stance against religious bigotry and at times risked being put in a difficult position, says Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Joseph Kurup.

"I assure you that the BN government will fulfill its election mandate for the good of all people.

"We have taken a zero tolerance approach and sometimes contentious position on religious bigotry," he told some 1,000 people at the Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism 30th anniversary dinner tonight.

Joseph, who is minister in charge of National Unity and Integration, said the bigotry of a few should not be viewed as an overall representation.

"How did acts of extremism by a tiny minority of Malaysians come to be seen as a true reflection of certain faith and all of its followers?

"Such vile misrepresentations are a source of great pain to many Malaysians turning people into being suspicious and fearing each other.

"There can be no meaningful dialogue for as long as the latent suspicion remain," he said.

Joseph urged religious leaders and politicians to come together in the face of extremism and bigotry.

"Moderates of all religions can only be united against those who preach hate if religious and political leaders engage with each other at the highest level," he said.

The Pensiangan MP also called for a renewed reconciliation among people of all faiths.

"There is a need for us to once again go through a process of reconciliation to break down divisive walls, to build bridges...

"to achieve an even better understanding on how best to interpret our various

principles and values for joint action and to implement the policies and programmes of national transformation for the benefit of all.

Joseph reiterated that the government had always taken a moderate line under Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and urged people to move away from a zero-sum game.

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