

UIA to get RM100mil to promote 'true Islamic values'

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By Lawrence Yong

Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) Malaysia will soon get RM100 million a year in research funds to help it champion true Islamic values in a fallen world, Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said.

To help the 30-year-old university defend the religion against an onslaught of 'Western' values, Muhyiddin said the government was prepared to make it only the sixth university in Malaysia with such a grant.

"You can clap your hands. We have the money," Muhyiddin, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, told an audience of about 4,000 flag-waving undergraduates at UIA.

"I can give you an assurance that by 2014, UIA will be recognised as a research university."

Malaysia now has only five research universities - Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Mara, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

Muhyiddin (left) lauded that UIA, with about 10 percent of its students from outside Malaysia, was a bastion of Islamic faith in the world.

"Muslims are now facing challenges which are not of their own making. The spread of western liberalism, under the pretext of human rights activism and gender rights movement, have brought new beliefs and ideas that are totally against Islam."

Muhyiddin cited that some Muslims were told that they have the right to denounce Islam and defend gay rights, lesbianism and same-sex marriage as examples.

"As we all know, these are sinful acts abhorred by Islam," Muhyiddin said.

He said UIA therefore had to be revitalised to be "a fortress of Islamic intellectualism and serve as a beacon of light for the Muslim Ummah (community of believers)."

Muhyiddin said that UIA should seek to restore the progressive role of Islam in all circles of discourse, arguing that some saw Islam as backward and extremist because it lacked quality educational institutions.

"Scholars and academics must come forward to enlighten the society about the true teachings of Islam," he said, citing how Malaysians had gone forth to help Muslims make peace in war-torn Bosnia, Palestine, Syria, Myanmar, South Thailand and the Philippines.

DPM: Why can't PAS, Umno work together?

UIA, which has a sprawling and modern campus in Gombak, is often ranked among the top 10 universities in Malaysia.

It was first mooted by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1982 and was backed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Unlike other mainstream universities in Malaysia, its language of instruction is English and Arabic and therefore it was incorporated as a company.

It has faculties teaching Architecture, Engineering, Languages, Economics and Law and its four-fold mission, according to its website, is "integration, islamisation, internationalisation and comprehensive excellence".

Briefly touching on the Islamic political situation in Malaysia during the dialogue with students, Muhyiddin said that he wished to see "unity" among all Muslims in the country.

"Why can't Umno and PAS work together?"

"As far as Umno is concerned, we have no problem with that," he said without elaborating further.

Muhyiddin had made the request to visit the university and its students and was the imam for the zohor prayers at the university's mosque.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had also visited UIA last month on Aug 23. Joining Muhyiddin on stage today was Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin (right), who did not give a speech but received loud cheers and applause when his name was mentioned.

Khairy, however, later avoided reporters when approached for comments.

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