

Anwar: Is Zaid getting his news only from Utusan?

MalaysiaKini.com

Jan 16, 2014

PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim said former law minister Zaid Ibrahim is ignorant of the former's stand on the Allah issue because he probably reads only Umno-linked Utusan Malaysia.

Zaid yesterday urged Anwar to make his stand clear to resolve the controversy that has divided Malaysians.

"Zaid must be reading only Utusan. If you read Harakah, The Rocket or Suara Keadilan, our statement is clear.

"I have not strayed on this issue," Anwar told reporters at PKR's headquarters in Petaling Jaya today.

Specifically, Anwar said he disagreed with Selangor Islamic Religious Department's (Jais) raid of Bible Society Malaysia (BSM) and its seizure of 321 copies of the Malay and Iban bibles, and the manner in which it was carried out.

However, he said, as the Islamic body was not directly under state control but under the sultan, the Pakatan state government can only advise the rulers on the matter.

Anwar said Pakatan Rakyat is sticking to its 2010 stand to allow non-Muslims to use 'Allah' on certain conditions, countering criticism that the coalition is not taking a stand on the controversial raid on Jan 2.

The conditions are that the use of 'Allah' is not misused, in particular to solicit Muslims to convert to Christianity.

Anwar warned that those who didn't understand Pakatan's very clear stand on the 'Allah' issue were merely trying to confuse the public to score political points or otherwise to take away the rights of the minorities in Malaysia.

"The issue of kalimah 'Allah', although some of our Malay friends want us to be tougher on this and firm...what we need to do is also engage the Muslim heartland a bit more....

"This is where Umno Selangor is having a massive campaign now in every single Malay village because you know why... they will say Anwar and Abdul Hadi Awang (PAS president) are wrong, they are now surrendering 'Allah' to the Christians," he said.

When asked if Jais should return copies of the Bible to BSM, Anwar didn't answer with a yes or no. However, he reiterated that he strongly disagreed with the manner in which Jais took hundreds of copies of the Bible away on January 2.

"I am not disputing the rights of Jais to question, investigate or call up people for clarification... I am questioning the manner that it's been done... the decency and failure to respect the sensitivity of other religions and in my mind, this is very dangerous for a multi-racial country," he said.

Defending faith by wisdom, not force

Anwar recommended the use of wisdom instead when such "sensitive" laws are seen broken in future.

"Any action that breaks the law has to be managed and resolved with due process but not with a showforce," he said, adding that history shows that Islam won converts over in the region only through defending the faith by wisdom and not force.

"If we use arrogant and high-handed ways, it will be difficult for us to attract non-Muslims to Islam," he said, adding that he himself was ready to engage those who disagreed with his personal views.

This included an open call for high level meeting between BN and Pakatan made last August, he said.

Anwar gave an example from his visit to India last month to illustrate how Malaysian Muslims need to take a broader view.

He said he felt sorry for the Muslim community, who had very little rights in India because they were the minorities there. They had no access to proper education or civil service.

"If I feel and express my concern there, how do you expect me to deny the rights of the minorities here?" he said.

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