

Isma deadlier than Perkasa, says PAS leader
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INTERVIEW Right wing NGO Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (Isma) is more “dangerous and racist” than Malay supremacist group Perkasa because it uses religion to bolster its racism, Parit Buntar MP Mujahid Yusof Rawa says.

“They are racists under the clout of religion,” the PAS national unity bureau chairperson said in an interview with Malaysiakini.

“They are more racist than Perkasa. At least Perkasa tells people, upfront, that it is racist,” said Mujahid.

The MP is concerned that Isma, in so doing, is depicting a “very negative” picture of Islam.

“Islam calls for harmony. But using religion as a cover for racist dogma is even more dangerous,” he said.

However, Mujahid stressed, he does not agree with the sedition charge against Isma president Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman for disparaging the Chinese minority in Malaysia.

“We need to engage with them and ask them what they are getting at. I do not agree with Abdullah Zaik being charged but we need to ask him what he really wants,” he said.

While Isma claims to champion the cause of the Malay Muslim majority in the country, Mujahid said he could not “compute” what Isma and its leaders were actually fighting for.

“Where on earth do these people come from to say only the Malay Muslims must rule the country? Islam is for everyone. You cannot say it’s for Malays alone,” he said.

“Malaysia needs Islam that is beneficial for everybody. If anyone hurts a non-Muslim, I will be his (the non-Muslim's) defender,” Mujahid said.

He warned that if Isma is allowed to continue with its agenda and discourse, it will give rise to extremism in Malaysia.

“If Malaysia does not address this problem in a honest manner, there is a real potential (for Malaysia) to be filled by extremists,” he added.

Breaking the walls we built

Mujahid, who grew up in a multicultural background by his own admission, is not prepared

to say whether racial ties were better off when he was growing up, but he did have his own reasons as to why tensions have reached an unprecedented level in the country.

“I think if you look at the Malay, Chinese and Indian grassroots - they have no problem, they get along well with one another,” he said.

“The culprits are the politicians. Unfortunately, I am a politician too, but I aspire not to be like them. They dictate according to their wants and they drag the public into their own dishonesty,” he added.

“Secondly, it’s the media, which seems to sell their stories through racial hatred. Sometimes, we exaggerate things, even though they have nothing to do with racial tension. The media exploits racial and religious hatred for their own good.

“But above all, the problem is that there is no democracy and transparency. And extremism can actually take over this vacant space where there is no democracy,” he warned.

Mujahid is a strong proponent of interfaith dialogues and for him, the key to overcome the divide is for each Malaysian to break his or her own “walls” and discarding assumptions made about other groups.

“These walls are built by ourselves. Nobody else can break these walls for you. You must to do on your own,” he said.

“Dialogue is not about me liquidating myself as a Muslim, and you liquidating yourself as a Christian. You stay where you are and I stay where I am. And we build a bridge in between,” he said.

Mujahid believes that Malaysians are now at a “crucial juncture” to determine the future of race relations in the country.

“The question we need to ask ourselves: do we want to remain where we are because we are continuously afraid - afraid of Christianisation, afraid that our race will be eroded?

“Or do we want to choose that we do not need people who are constantly prejudiced? There needs to be a movement here.”

Yesterday, former Bar Council chairperson S Ambiga and national laureate A Samad Said launched a new NGO, Negara-Ku, to battle racism and extremism.

But barely a day old, the group came under attack from Isma.

