

'Why no fatwa against Dr M and Rukun Negara?'

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DAP has challenged the Selangor religious council (Mais) to issue a fatwa against the Rukun Negara and a former prime minister's Vision 2020 for espousing liberalism, since it has done so against NGO Sisters in Islam (SIS).

Bukit Bendera MP Zairil Khir Johari in a statement today pointed out that guaranteeing liberalism is enshrined both.

"Mais' act of labelling SIS illegal (haram) on the allegation of religious liberalism and pluralism not only confuses the Muslims, but the entire people of Malaysia.

"This is because the public knows the ideological foundation of our country - the Rukun Negara - clearly states that our country should aspire to 'guarantee a liberal approach towards her rich and varied cultural traditions'," he said.

The longer version of the Rukun Negara states: 'Menjamin satu cara liberal terhadap tradisi-tradisi kebudayaannya yang kaya dan berbagai corak'.

Zairil (left), who is also DAP assistant to the national publicity secretary, added the national aspiration Vision 2020 also espouses a liberal society.

He pointed out its fifth vision is "to create a society that is liberal and tolerant, where multiethnic Malaysians are free to practice their respective customs, cultures and religious beliefs"

The MP asked, "Is Mais unaware of this matter?"

"And if they now are aware, will they also proclaim that the Rukun Negara and Vision 2020 along with the latter's creator, former PM Dr Mahathir Mohamad, as haram and deviating from Islamic teachings?" he quipped.

Yesterday SIS filed a joint judicial review over Mais' fatwa, that accuses them of "liberalism and pluralism".

'Liberalism abused'

The co-appellants are former de facto law minister Zaid Ibrahim and cofounder and former SIS executive director Zainah Anwar.

Zairil urged a more civil approach to resolving ideological differences, stating that the word "liberalism" had been misused for political ends.

"This generalisation is also unfair to SIS which was never called to defend itself that even it is unsure which part of the organisation or its advocacy is linked to liberalism and religious pluralism," he said.

Zairil added just because the crux of SIS's advocacy work is not understood does not mean it or any other organisations should be arbitrarily branded as deviant.

He also voiced support for SIS' move to take the matter up with the courts and hoped that it will get a just decision.

Zairil called Mais' fatwa banning SIS as a "backward" action detrimental to the rakyat, including the Malay Muslim community.

"The fatwa not only punishes SIS as an illegal organisation but also restricts its freedom as an organisation to publish any reading material, be it printed or electronic.

"At the same time, Mais had never issued any statement nor action against NGOs that were proven to be extreme like Perkasa which openly threatened to burn the holy books of other religions.

"Was Perkasa's action Islamic or does the country has double standards?" he said.