

## **Social media used to tarnish image of Islam, says DPM**

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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the social media boom in recent years has been identified as a source of various social ills and the dissemination of information by various unauthoritative mass media channels, leading to the manipulation of certain issues by irresponsible people.

"We find that some isolated issues are often played up to tarnish the image of Islam, and religious institutions, heads of religious departments, muftis, and Muslim intellectuals are subjected to character assassination," he was quoted as saying by Bernama today.

As reported by the national news agency, this was part of a statement circulated in conjunction with the meeting of the main committee of the Islamic Consultative Council at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Zahid chaired the meeting, which was also attended by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) director-general Othman Mustapha, and PAS spiritual leader Haron Din.

Zahid said that though the efforts of religious authorities were seen as able to stem the flow of false news, the dissemination of negative news continued unabated.

As such, he called for wider propagation of Islamic missionary information through the Internet to match the dissemination via the traditional media as a counter-move.

He reasoned that the conveying of missionary information over the Internet enabled the message to be carried across borders and to reach all people.

"In this way, the various needs of Muslims can be conveyed in accordance with current preferences suitable to Islamic teachings."

He said missionaries should take it as a challenge and preach to eliminate this attitude among the people, either through the mass media, electronic media, or social media.

Zahid, who is also the home minister, said the use of new media in Islam should place more emphasis on the concept of devotion and piety and making Islam the way of life.

### **'Deviant teachings'**

He also said that liberalism, which fuelled the spread of deviant teachings, should be stemmed to stop the development of thoughts and ideologies contrary to the teachings of Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah.

He said Syiah teachings remained widespread in the country with the emergence of certain groups which targeted students, but stressed that monitoring was being stepped up to check its spread.

The government, through Jakim, was also giving special focus to checking the worrying influence and spread of Islamic State ideology through explanations along with state religious agencies, he said.

"The government views this matter seriously and is stepping up every effort in an integrated manner with all national security agencies to deny any foothold in this country to militant groups," he said.

The Islamic Consultative Council comprises leaders from religious, academic, corporate, and NGO bodies.

It serves as a think-tank to help the government implement the national development agenda on an Islamic foundation.

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