

NGOs call for stop to gutter politics, urge review of BTN
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In the face of eroding national unity in the run-up to the 14th general election, Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM) has called for among others, a stop in gutter and fear politics, corruption, and for a review of the functions of the Biro Tata Negara (National Civics Bureau).

At a press conference, the coalition of pro-unity NGOs lamented the withering of the spirit of togetherness among the country's multiracial community, as well as the spouting of racial and religious hate speeches by certain parties, without reprimand by the authorities.

"This is expected to deteriorate in the upcoming GE14. The run-up (to the polls) is already suggesting that it will be the most hostile ever," said GBM chairperson Zaid Kamaruddin.

Thus, Zaid called upon political parties to cease all form of gutter politics which use race and religion to incite bigotry, fear politics which instigate anxiety and insecurity, as well as for all parties to refrain from vote-buying and phantom-voting.

Zaid further urged political parties to pay attention and try to address the myriad of national issues in their respective election manifestos.

"The following policy considerations are crucial. To review an action blueprint for national unity, the tabling of the National Harmony Act in Parliament, the forming of a national unity committee to oversee the implementation of national unity programs nationwide, and the establishing of an independent national unity fund to fund these programmes."

Zaid (*photo*) also urged revising school and university curricula and co-curricular activities to foster unity, and asked for an independent Equality Commission to be established to deal with complaints about discrimination.

"Also, an independent review of the Biro Tata Negara should be commissioned to ensure its operations are transparent and accountable.

"Malaysia should also ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and undertake plans to implement its recommendations," he added.

Zaid called on all Malaysians, regardless of their political affiliations, to unite in mutual respect and celebrate the diversity in Malaysia.

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