

Perlis mufti defends Nik Aziz over pluralism controversy
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Perlis mufti Juanda Jaya came to the defence of Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat today, describing those who criticised the latter for showing respect to other religions as "extremists".

Nik Aziz has been lambasted as a promoter of pluralism at an Islamic seminar organised by government religious agencies and NGOs because the menteri besar had attended a function at a Buddhist temple.

According to Juanda, such attacks are "wicked" and akin to "Taliban-style" antipathy to the Malaysian tradition of mutual respect for religious differences.

dr juanda jaya perlis mufti candidate 081106 "I am not a PAS member or a member of any political party, but I am very disappointed when a religious figure recognised by people at large is associated with pluralism as a set of beliefs merely because he attended a function organised by Buddhists.

"This accusation (against Nik Aziz) is very wicked. Nik Aziz's record shows that he has been very consistent on issues relating to Islam," said Juanda in a statement.

Juanda was responding to a report in Utusan Malaysia where a number of Muslims scholars and intellectuals had lambasted Nik Aziz for allegedly promoting pluralism.

Pluralism has been seen by some quarters with suspicion as an attempt to blur the differences between Islam and the other religions and relegate Islamic teachings and practices to secondary status.

Don't use aqidah to lead people astray

Juanda, however, said there is a difference between being respectful of the right of non-Muslims to their religious freedom - which is recognised by Islam - and promoting pluralism.

"It should not be that those regarded as scholars cannot understand this issue of methodology in differentiating between the two."

"Didn't the Prophet Muhammad himself receive a delegation of Christians from Najran into the Masjid Nabawi? Did he not allow them to perform their religious services in that second-most sacred place?

utusan 151210 awas ancaman pluralisme "Did not the Prophet Muhammad stand up out of respect for the funeral process of a Jew that was passing in front of him?

"Did not (the second caliph) Omar bin al-Khattab when opening Palestine allow considerable freedom and respect to the Christian patriarch and paid a courtesy visit to the Church of Nativity?

"Were the Prophet and Omar pluralists? Certainly not! If so, then the formula and principles of these reactionaries is indeed wrong and ill-intentioned," said Juanda.

"I am concerned with the tendency of certain academics and religious scholars who use issues of beliefs to bring about an atmosphere of antagonism between politicians.

"Don't use issues of aqidah (belief) to lead people astray and make apostates out of politicians who they are not in agreement with.

"This can lead to extremism and chaos between the religions in Malaysia. As a result of such an attitude, many people will be made deviants and their beliefs made suspect.

"The formula of these extremists will also lead to the wrong views towards the government's policy of (promoting) harmony between the different religious adherents in Malaysia.

"Will they also regard such a policy and (government) leaders as deviant?" asked Juanda.

Ikim rejects religious pluralism

According to Utusan Malaysia in front-page report today, Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim was also criticised for allegedly promoting pluralism through the Institute of Policy Studies (IKD) led by his former press secretary and PKR supreme council member Khalid Jaafar.

IKD and its sister organisation, the Middle Eastern Graduates Centre, are said to have published "dangerous" books that promote religious equality.

In a related development, the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim) said it rejects "religious pluralism which claims that all religions are equally true and equally good."

While Islam recognises that truths, goodness and ethical beauty do exist in the other religions, it forbids the practice of "making religion a mockery and a plaything".

"Issues amongst different religious followers have to be resolved with the utmost justice, fairness and with the spirit of mutual respect towards religious fundamentals," said the organisation in a statement.