

**Objective discourse:**  
Anwar meeting participants at the International Forum on Islamophobia in Putrajaya. With him are (from right, back row) Zambray, Fadillah and Ahmad Zahid.  
— Bernama



## 'Counter Islamophobia with civilised exchange of ideas'

**PUTRAJAYA:** Addressing Islamophobia should be done through a civilised contestation of ideas, not through hatred and enmity, says the Prime Minister.

A firm believer in the need for discourse, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said that while it is easy to retaliate through aggression, there must be strength and courage to continue to engage so that differences can be understood.

He also pointed out that how Muslims and Islamic countries respond to prejudices is also important so as not to reaffirm the negative perception that some already have of the religion and its followers.

"Our discourse should not be about the fight between the West and the East, nor should it be about Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or Confucianism.

"It should be a contestation of ideas to determine what is wrong with our society. When discussing ideology and religion, it (should not) be devoid of humanity and compas-

***"When discussing ideology and religion, it (should not) be devoid of humanity and compassion."***

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

sion," he said in his keynote address yesterday at the International Forum on Islamophobia, which also included Deputy Prime Ministers Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.

The Prime Minister said that in reacting to Islamophobia, it is important to ensure that it is in accordance with Islamic teachings.

He recalled how, during a visit to

Pakistan years ago, he witnessed the burning of motorcycles, houses and properties by protesters who were angry with a series of Danish cartoons that depicted Prophet Muhammad.

"I had asked, how is it that our response is not according to Islam, where it teaches us to maintain peace and justice.

"I pointed out that the way they responded also stemmed from strong prejudice and ignorance when such acts should be in accordance with the maqasid syariah or the higher objectives of the syariah.

"It is critical to the Muslim world how we respond, and it should be with sophistication, understanding and education," he added.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambray Abd Kadir said the root cause of Islamophobia lies in misinformation and is often linked to broader social and political issues such as xenophobia, racism and anti-immigrant sentiments that are also fuelled by a lack of unbiased information.

"Addressing these underlying issues is critical in rebuilding tolerance and respect for people from all walks of life.

"By doing so, we are fulfilling our duty to uphold the fundamental human rights of all individuals while building a more inclusive and equitable society," he said in his remarks.

Zambray said Malaysia will not allow Islamophobia to continue unabated, as this would be complicit in the violation of fundamental human rights.

He said Muslims should have the right to profess their faith without fear of discrimination, persecution or intimidation, as the right to believe and practise one's religion is enshrined in international law as a fundamental human right.

"Islamophobia can only be addressed if all parties work together to fight it.

"We must speak out against prejudice and injustice, support our fellow Muslims and stand with them in solidarity," Zambray added.