

# Call for greater empathy, dialogue between people of different faiths

**TOKYO:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called for greater empathy and dialogue between people of different faiths.

In a speech at Keio University in honour of the late Professor Toshihiko Izutsu, Anwar said this was crucial in an increasingly fragmented world.

He said the work of Izutsu, a scholar who translated the Holy Quran into Japanese, highlighted the universal human quest for meaning and understanding.

“Central to Izutsu’s approach is his doctrine of empathy in the study of religions.”

Anwar said Izutsu’s advocacy of

empathy paved the way for a more nuanced and respectful approach to cross-cultural dialogue.

“Relating this in practical terms to the world today, without empathy, prejudice and distrust among followers of different faiths fester and, if unchecked, leads on to hostility and phobias.

“Coupled with other factors such as politics and ethnocentrism, this lack of empathy gives rise, for example, to Islamophobia.”

Anwar said an empathic approach was crucial in fostering harmony and peace.

“Unfortunately, we are confront-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim giving a speech titled 'A Feast of Civilisations: The Life and Mind of Toshihiko Izutsu' at the East Research Building of Keio University in Tokyo yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

ed with insidious challenges such as religious scholars and opportunistic politicians who sow the seeds of suspicion and discord.”

Anwar said this was why greater dialogue between people of different faiths was necessary.

He said it was incumbent on

Muslims to be empathetic towards other religions to promote and preserve societal harmony.

“But empathy has to be reciprocal. As we consider the current global landscape, Izutsu’s emphasis on empathy and dialogue becomes even more crucial.”

Anwar also paid tribute to Izutsu’s achievements, including his translation of the Quran.

He said Izutsu’s ability to capture the essence and semantic nuances of Quranic text was remarkable and a testament to the scholar’s linguistic capabilities.