

STRONG VALUES NEEDED

PM: UPHOLD NATION'S MULTICULTURALISM

Counter racial rhetoric with love, unity, PM tells youth

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has reminded the youth that the promotion of ideas must be accompanied by strong values, particularly love and compassion, to uphold Malaysia's multiculturalism.

He said several quarters had exploited racial sentiments under the guise of nationalism to sow hatred within society.

This, he said, made it the youth's responsibility to seek enlightenment and find solutions.

"Shallow and bankrupt individuals will look for issues that can attract attention, relying on narrow racial perspectives.

"(For example), Malays may feel threatened, perhaps, because of a single Chinese poster, (while) the Chinese claim their rights are being denied and challenged.

"In some states, Sabah's issues are said to be undermined. These are all sentiments that can

draw people in.

"The duty of young people is to seek enlightenment critically and find solutions," Anwar said during the launch of the Putrajaya Festival of Ideas here.

He also criticised groups trying to champion race and religion issues despite not having read Malay literature.

He said the group was not really patriotic and instead spread hatred without factual support.

"(They) have not read the 'great Malay literature', yet they wish to be the champions of Malays. That is why they speak without understanding (*lintang-pukang*).

"Great literature must be mastered."

He said other countries had praised Malaysia and Asean as the most peaceful region in the world, based on his recent visits to China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Peru, Brazil and South Korea, as well as for being one of the fastest-growing in terms of economic development.

Anwar said Malaysia specifically was an example of strong unity despite its multiculturalism.

"Outsiders observe and say (Malaysia) is one of the most complex countries to manage, with many '*fi'il*' (behaviours), various skin colours.

"But there is a spirit of unity and peace."

Meanwhile, a Sabah student's concern about possibly not being

able to secure a scholarship because her mother has not yet obtained permanent resident status has caught Anwar's attention, Bernama reported.

Universiti Utara Malaysia student Stephanie Juditha Sebastian shared her fears during a dialogue session with the prime minister at the Putrajaya Festival of Ideas.

Stephanie said although her mother was born and raised in the state, she has yet to obtain Malaysian citizenship despite numerous efforts since 1990.

"The issue of citizenship is 'famous' in Sabah. (For example), my mother was born and raised in Sabah, but until now she has not received a permanent resident status," she said.

"This worries me a lot because to apply for the scholarship, (among the conditions are) both parents must have citizenship."

She added that she had raised the issue with the home minister last year, but had received no response.

In response, Anwar asked the student to submit an official letter, along with complete documents, to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for further action.

Zahid, who was present at the dialogue session, encouraged the student to submit the letter to him: "Give the letter to uncle. Let uncle settle it."