

'Provide avenue to discuss religion'

New Straits Times

December 4, 2011

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Umno must engage Islamic scholars, says Arau representative

HAVING an avenue for Islamic scholars and students to discuss religious issues would help them to engage with Umno, said Perlis representative Fathul Bari Mat Jahya.

"Umno fights for religious issues. But where are the religious experts?"

"Why don't we provide them an avenue to speak on these issues?"

"At present, they are shying away from Umno because that platform is not provided to them. This has caused them to voice out their opinions during ceramah or in mosques," said the Arau delegate while debating the motion on religion, education and social matters yesterday.

Fathul Bari also urged Umno members to deal with criticisms by the opposition based on facts and figures.

"And please be polite but firm, without having to stoop as low as them by shouting or being rude."

Pahang representative Datuk Mohamad Sahfri Abdul Aziz echoed similar sentiments as he said having more Islamic scholars in Umno would help impart strong values to the Malays.

He said the government spent about RM1 billion on religious matters annually, but noted that it would be sad if the Malays did not benefit from this.

Johor Umno representative Mohd Tahir Mohd Taat urged the government to ensure the meritocracy system for entry into institutes of higher learning did not sideline school leavers from rural and interior areas.

He said rural students were different as they studied in a different environment and did not have the same infrastructure available in cities.

"The students from Ulu Tembeling, Ulu Rejang, and Orang Asli students from Bukit Kepong may not be the same as students from Kuala Lumpur, Penang or Johor Baru."

Federal Territory representative Rizalman Mokhtar said Pas was keeping mum on sensitive issues related to the Muslims as they wanted to appease their allies in the loose opposition pact.

He said the party's actions had proven that they would abandon their principles on the Islamic state and hudud to fish for votes.

"Why are they silent?"

"To protect their votes, to appease Anwar (Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim)?"

"Because DAP asked them to keep quiet?"

Rizalman said Pas's direction in terms of Islam depended on their alliances with their friends such as DAP.

"If the opposition rules, DAP may even replace Pas in determining the direction of Islam."

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Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/local/umno/provide-avenue-to-discuss-religion-1.14668>