

**Answering 'Salam 1Malaysia' And Its Decorum  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 29 (Bernama) -- The greeting "Salam 1Malaysia" is gaining popularity.

It emanated from the "1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now" slogan mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

It is now being uttered at public functions and by newscasters at the outset and the end of radio or television news bulletins.

However, certain quarters claimed that the greeting was a blasphemy and against the Prophet's practice and Islamic teachings as there was no specific reply like "waalaikumussalam" to "assalamualaikum" (greeting among Muslims) and "salam sejahtera" to "salam sejahtera".

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Human Ecology lecturer Dr Amini Amir Abdullah said the "Salam 1Malaysia" greeting would not be an act of sacrilege unless it was tagged to the Muslim greeting.

"Among fellow Muslims, the 'Salam 1Malaysia' could be uttered after the Muslim greeting. It is incumbent upon leaders to popularise it.

"Salam 1Malaysia could be answered by uttering 'Rakyat Didahulukan, Pencapaian Diutamakan' (People First, Performance Now)," he said, adding that the Information Department could provide a guideline on the greeting and its appropriate reply, and the proper decorum for its usage.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Head of Malay Studies Centre Dr Norizah Ardi said the most appropriate response to the greeting was by repeating it.

"Logically speaking, the greeting is like 'salam sejahtera' or 'good morning' where they are answered by repeating them," she said.

Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Nik Safiah Karim said "Salam 1Malaysia" could be likened to "salam perpaduan" which used to be popular before.

The cultural activist said although there was no specific response to "Salam 1Malaysia" unlike "how are you?" and "assalamualaikum", she concurred with Norizah that it ought to be answered by repeating the greeting.

"There is nothing wrong with inculcating the use of the greeting as it doesn't have a connotation to any race or religion. Furthermore it could indirectly strengthen race relations," she said.

Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia director-general Datuk Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan said as the greeting was aimed at strengthening social cohesion, the question of how to

answer it was immaterial as what mattered most was its purpose was to pray for the people's unity and prosperity.

Motivational consultant Rujhan Mohamed Razali from Kiffah Motivation and Training Sdn Bhd said apart from "assalamualaikum", other greetings fell into the category of "harus" (optional), which meant that is it may or may not be uttered".

He said as long as the greeting was not bordering on religion, it could be answered by repeating it as its objective was to foster unity and harmony.

"Anyway, it is up to us whether we want to answer it or not," said Rujhan, who is also a panel member of the "Tanyalah Ustadz" programme over TV9.

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