

## **Umno Continues To Promote The Sanctity Of Islam**

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**By Mohamad Bakri Darus**

MELAKA, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Umno, the core component of the country's ruling party, continues to spread the word of Islam, and hence, enabled Malaysia to become an exemplary model of an Islamic country, according to an academician.

Rector of Melaka Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Datuk Prof Dr Mizan Hitam said since it was established in 1946, Umno, as a Malay-based party, had never strayed from the struggle to uphold Islam.

"Umno is a party for the Malays in Malaysia and cannot be separated from Islam. It is clearly stated in the Federal Constitution.

"A Malay, as defined in the Constitution must be a Muslim, speaks the Malay language and practices Malay customs. So, it can be concluded that the Malays in Malaysia are Muslims, while the most relevant Malay party is Umno," he told Bernama here.

Mizan said in the context of Umno's existence, being un-Islamic was never an issue because the party was established on the principles of Islam and was associated with the struggles of the Malays.

"In the early years, Umno and PAS were in the Alliance ... I can say that they (both parties) have a similar political ideology. The only difference is that Umno is based on Malay nationalism, while the thrust of PAS is Islam," he said.

Mizan said Umno's development policies implemented since independence had led to economic development and proper management of national wealth in line with the teachings of Islam.

Islam had continued to grow in Malaysia and made Malaysia a successful Islamic country, he said.

"The organising of the International Quran Recital Assembly, for example, has continued until today and had improved Malaysia's status in the eyes of the world," he said.

He said Umno, in its struggle to uphold Islam, had also strengthened religious institutions and the Islamisation process in the country, including in terms of administration, economy and financial.

"Umno, through the ruling party had managed to implement Islamic economic system such as the establishment of Bank Islam and Islamic banking system, which were eventually adopted by many other conventional banks. This is something that no one can deny," he said.

Furthermore, Mizan said the establishment of the Halal Hub had not only made Malaysia the centre for production of halal products, but had also created an ecosystem for Islamic economy.

He said the concept of "wasatiyyah" or moderation propagated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was a principle for nationhood about how the Muslims should discharge their responsibilities and to ensure that the non-Muslims in the country also enjoyed their rights.

This had made Malaysia a source of reference for other countries, he said. Mizan said Umno had also made major contributions towards the national education system by providing the best and balanced education system to churn out leaders capable of contributing to the growth of the economy.

As such, Mizan said all Umno leaders must become an exemplary role model of an Islamic leader for the community.

In order to win the hearts of the Malays, he said Umno leaders at all levels must be involved in community organisations including the Village Development and Security Committee, Parent-Teacher Association, as well as mosque committees to ensure that Umno's struggle would remain relevant.

"This is important because that is where the strength of the Malays lies. If Umno leaders start avoiding religious institutions, the vacancy created will be filled by opposition party leaders," he added.

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