

Speak against extremism, moderates told

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VALUABLE LESSONS: Confront also those who champion policies that can lead to violence, says Raja Nazrin

KUALA LUMPUR: MODERATES in Muslim nations and the West must confront extremism arising not only from the religious establishment but also among those who champion policies which can lead to violence.

Raja Muda of Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Shah said yesterday moderates needed to speak up against terrorism and extremism, including against powerful members of the media and governments that supported hardline foreign and security policies that could lead to conflict abroad.

"In this regard, the launching of the Global Movement of Moderates by the prime minister (Datuk Seri Najib Razak) is an important initiative in galvanising and uniting moderate voices of peace among people of all cultures and beliefs."

He said this at the launch of *9/11 and the Attack on Muslims*, a collection of essays by Tan Sri Munir Majid.

Originally published in the *New Straits Times* in the four years following the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the essays depict how the US leadership's neo-conservative foreign policy was eventually used to declare an open war on Muslims.

It also highlights the suffering of Muslims afterwards without reducing the enormity of the 9/11 attacks or sparing Muslims for failing to contain the roots of terrorism.

Raja Nazrin said the book offered valuable lessons on the dangers of binary or "black-and-white" thinking.

"I believe Munir's aim in writing this book is to build bridges between the Muslim world and the West rather than to destroy them. It is as much about the dangers of anti-West sentiment held by Muslims as it is about anti-Muslim sentiments held by the West."

He said the misunderstanding between Muslims and the West arose from a failure to communicate effectively.

"Among the distortions in the West are the identification of Islam and Muslims with violence and terrorism, the presumption that Islam is incompatible with democracy and the confusion of the influence of tradition and culture with religion. Muslims also share responsibility. Giving Islamic appellations to militant movements and committing terrorist acts in the name of Islam against unarmed civilians have contributed to (Islam's) negative image and understanding in the West."

Meanwhile, Munir, who is visiting senior fellow, Southeast Asia International Affairs Programme at LSE IDEAS, said there was no justification for acts of terror but the cause should be addressed to reduce the incidence. He added US President Barack Obama's more consultative foreign policy had given some hope as far as Muslims were concerned.

The book is available at bookstores at RM39.90.

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