

Agong tells all to stop the provocation

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Yang di-Pertuan Agong today endorsed the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) as part of the government's initiative to establish harmony in the country, and warned all quarters to stop provoking one another.

“In preserving the country's harmony and seeking a common ground on various religious and ethnic matters, the government has established the National Unity Consultative Council.

“We call on all parties to refrain from making any statement or action that might be deemed provocative or sensitive. Be mindful that when unity disintegrates, the country will head towards destruction,” Tuanku Alhaj Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah said in his royal address to the first meeting of the second 13th Parliament session.

The Agong's speech comes in the wake of the formation of the National Unity Front (NUF) to counter the NUCC by several Malay right-wing non-governmental organisations (NGO).

The Malay NGOs, which include Perkasa and Isma, had rejected the NUCC wholesale on the grounds that issues the council fought for were allegedly offensive to Malays.

Instead, NUF seeks to establish “Malay benevolent dominance”, believing that is the answer to maintaining unity and harmony in Malaysia.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong added: “...we should reinforce unity by cultivating mutual respect and moderation in life.”

His Majesty said stern action should be taken against irresponsible parties seeking to propagate thinking and action that would undermine the supremacy of the country's constitution.

“All parties should realise that solidarity is essential, and should therefore return to the basic tenets on which this nation was founded by our past leaders.”

Meanwhile, the Agong added that any threat to the Muslims' faith, such as “pluralism and deviant teachings” should be dealt with by the religious authorities in line with the Sunnah Wal Jamaah sect.

‘Educate public on GST’

The Agong also endorsed the controversial Goods and Services Tax (GST), which is to be implemented next year, as a measure to strengthen the country's economy.

Opposition MP's and Pakatan Rakyat-friendly activists have often criticised the GST for

allegedly being an unnecessary burden on the people.

But the King today urged MP's to educate the public on the benefits of the GST, in an apparent bid to silence their opposition towards the tax.

“Our government will further consolidate its financial position and ensure fiscal sustainability in the long run, among others by broadening the tax base and improving tax administration. This includes the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) which will be implemented in April 2015.

“We urge the government and honourable members to work together in helping the people to understand the implementation and benefits of the GST, which is not an additional form of tax, but a replacement of the existing Sales Tax and Service Tax.”

His Majesty urged everyone to “be realistic and be prepared” in facing the increasingly challenging global economy.

‘Corruption: More needs to be done’

The Agong was full of praise for the government's initiatives to lower the cost of living, combat security threats, and strengthen the nation's economy.

He assured that Malaysians' interests will remain the utmost priority and will not be compromised when the government signs various trade and investment agreements, in an apparent reference to the controversial Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

The King reminded the public that it was essential for Malaysia to be at the forefront of global competitive markets “by providing a conducive investment climate.”

“As a trading nation, it is vital that the government ventures into new markets for its products and services. In this regard, Malaysia has signed various trade and investment agreements at the international level,” he said.

The Agong however noted that the government could do more in combating corruption and crime, creating high-valued employment, helping senior citizens and providing more Malaysia People's Shops.

“We fully support the government's continued emphasis on good governance through enhancing the principles of transparency and the elimination of corruption that has resulted in the country attaining a better position in the 2013 Corruption Perception Index,” he told the Dewan Rakyat.

“However, more needs to be done by the government and private sector as well as the people in combating corruption and abuse of power.”

‘Timing of GST is wrong’

In reply to the speech, PKR's Batu MP Tian Chua said the Agong was merely announcing the policies of the government.

He said Pakatan would put up a case in the debate later that GST was not applicable to Malaysia

in its current condition because the country as a whole would not be benefit from it.

“Our rejection is not GST per say, there are so many tools that we can use to generate revenues, but GST is being implemented at a time when we are not ready,” he told reporters at the sideline of the opening ceremony.

He said he was of the opinion that the King did not mean to target Syiah followers when the latter said Malaysia shall not allow pluralism in Islam.

“I think the King was referring to religions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism that only believe in the fact that god is one and they don’t recognise the pluralistic nature of god.

“Of course the majority of Malaysian Muslims practice Sunni Islam, but the constitution guarantees the freedom of religion and no persecution of minorities is legal, I don’t think the king has deviated from that,” Tian Chua said.

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