

**Government Has Never Restricted Freedom Of Speech – Zahid
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JITRA, Oct 3 (Bernama) -- Clear evidence that the government has never restricted freedom of speech rests in the fact that 116,000 organisations are registered with the Registrar of Societies, said Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the government had never blocked the registration of organisations, even of those which did not share the government view.

"If there are quarters which say there's restriction on expression of opinions and views, the ROS can provide empirical evidence that the registered organisations are proof that the government gives such freedom.

"There is freedom of speech and movement; you can be as vociferous as you want so long as you do not threaten public order. Go on and gather as many members as you want so long as you do not touch on sensitive matters and violate the law, including the Sedition Act," he said.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the home minister, spoke at the launch of the 2015 National Festival of Organisations at Tasik Darulaman here. The event was also attended by the ROS director-general, Datuk Mohammad Razin Abdullah.

Ahmad Zahid said the 116,000 organisations registered with the ROS comprised 53,000 parent organisations and 63,000 active branches.

"The number of registered organisations in Malaysia is relatively numerous compared to the population," he said, adding that the organisations were made up of political parties, cultural bodies, social associations and others.

He also said that ROS' approval of the registration of Parti Amanah Negara, announced yesterday, was further proof of the government's openness in ensuring that there was no restriction in freedom of speech, even if the organisations' views differed from those of the government.

The ROS approved the registration of Amanah based on the application forwarded to it, he said.

What was done by ROS and the other agencies, he said, was an extension of the responsible attitude of the government to see the country achieve the desired status of a developed nation.

Ahmad Zahid called on the silent majority to reject the vociferous minority which often dismissed the nation's achievements even when they were recognised by other countries.

Meanwhile, he warned organisations that had yet to be registered with the ROS to refrain from carrying out any activity.

Those which were adamant and refused to register could face legal action based on the provisions of the Societies Act 1966, he said.

Ahmad Zahid said there now existed many organisations in various names that either supported or opposed the government.

He said the ROS and the Home Ministry monitored organisations to determine whether they indulged in illegal activities, engaged in secret society activities in the name of religious organisations and used funds derived through money laundering.

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