

**Strengthen Unity to Maintain Country's Independence - Zahid Hamidi**  
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LIPIS, Aug 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysians, regardless of race, religion and political affiliation should strengthen unity to ensure the country's independence is maintained, especially in facing a new form of mental colonisation.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said this being that outsiders are always looking for ways to break up the people in the country by using sensitive issues on religion, race, equality and human rights.

"In conjunction with this Merdeka month, all quarters should set aside differences, set aside narrow racial interests and the attitude of pushing aside other religions because we, as Malaysians, should enhance our unity.

"Yes, we can differ in opinions, and we also are having a new party whose application will be approved, but, let us not take easy those things because history has proven that a splinter party like this will be cancerous, if not curbed.

"Enough is enough for UMNO members and the Malays who are not happy with one another, let us work together, let us be united as one," he said when opening the Lapis UMNO divisional delegates meeting here today.

Also present were Lapis UMNO division leader Datum Abdul Raman Mohammad and Deputy Home Minister Datum Nor Jazzman Mohamed.

Ahmad Wahid, who is also UMNO vice-president, said history had also proven that Muslim countries, like Afghanistan and Syria, were in conflict because of the rift among their people.

"I am saying this because I do not want our country to be like that because we know, Malaysia is facing various threats, including from the Daesh militant group which wants to spread its influence by forming Katibah Nusantara in countries in this region.

"They want to break up all these countries not based on religion, their struggle, which they said is for Islam, is only escapism to carry out their agenda," he added.

Ahmad Zahid said the independence achieved by the country was the result of the hardwork by past leaders and it is the responsibility of the present generation to safeguard it with unity and supporting the country's leadership.

"To do so, there will certainly be challenges. The tallest tree will be the one to feel the strong winds, yet no matter how strong the wind, if the root is strong, it will continue to thrive," he added.

He said the 'penyapu lidi' (broom made from coconut palm rib) would provide a good example.

"One coconut rib can easily be broke compared with when many of them are tied together," he added.

The deputy prime minister expressed regrets over the attitude of certain quarters in the country for not hoisting the national flag during the Merdeka month.

"It is like the Jalur Gemilang is a normal flag. In other countries, the people would fly their national flag with the approaching of their Independence Day celebration.

"I am not saying that the people do not love the country, but it will reflect more of their love for the country if they are to translate it by flying the Jalur Gemilang," he added.

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