

TN50 Premier Dialogue: Extremism, Racial Unity Among Issues Debated

NILAI, Feb 20 (Bernama) -- Education, economy, religious institutions, racial unity and religious extremists were the top issues at the 2050 National Transformation Dialogue (TN50) between Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and youths here tonight.

The dialogue, chaired by Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi, started at 8.30 pm, with the Deputy Prime Minister answering directly questions from the participants at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM).

Religious extremism and radicalism was raised by singer and missionary Hafiz Hamidun who expressed fears that the technological sophistication currently could worsen the situation due to misuse.

Meanwhile, another participant Rahmat Ikhsan Mohd Sofyan said the Gathering 355 held in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday could create two groups, namely, religious extremists and liberals.

Commenting on the matter, Ahmad Zahid said non-verbal communication controlled current social media communication which represented 87 per cent while the balance 13 per cent via conventional media.

"Recruitment by extremists is by non-verbal communications. Currently, of the 157 Malaysians who joined up with extremists on Iraqi and Syrian soil, 37 have been killed. They looked for a shortcut to 'heaven'.

"Most studies find those who joined the groups had no religious education foundation," he said.

Commenting further, Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said his ministry had rehabilitated 87.5 per cent of the individuals caught who were directly involved in extremist groups via deradicalisation programmes which were also shared with other countries.

On the commitment of the government in empowering Islam in the country by 2050, the Deputy Prime Minister said numerous efforts had been made by the government such as maqasid syariah (objective of Islamic laws), moderation and Islamic banking.

"The government is committed to implement Islam which is holistic not rhetoric," he said.

This, he said, was proven via the financing of 42,681 Quran and personal obligation classes (KAFA) which was financed by the government via the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), 72 Secondary Religious Schools and 332 State Religious Schools, financed by the federal government.

"This proves the federal government's commitment to help the development and interpretation to boost Islam as a universal religion," he said while expressing hope the 102,000 Quran memorisers would represent the nation in the professional sector in 2050 compared to 1,513 people currently.

To a question from novelist Ain Maisarah who hoped youths would not be easily influenced by western culture, Ahmad Zahid said he was confident, despite having different modules, local universities would stay committed in upholding the issues of civilisation.

"It cannot be stopped. We must give breath and soul to ensure continuation to the realization of civilisation. In fact, we want to make the professionals (into) ulama and the ulama, professionals," he said.

Also present were Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, Menteri Negeri Sembilan Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and USIM Vice-Chancellor, Prof Datuk Dr Musa Ahmad.

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