

## **Kedah Sultan Regrets Firing Up Of Discord Among Muslims By Political Leaders**

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ALOR SETAR, Aug 14 (Bernama) -- The Sultan of Kedah, Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'Adzam Shah today expressed his sadness over the stirring up of enmity and polemics among Muslims by opportunistic political leaders and individuals with vested interest in this era of rapid information and communication technology advancement.

In fact, the Sultan said, in this era which was seeing prompt and fast flow of information, religious scholars were no exception in issuing fatwa (edicts), making accusations and counter-accusations and debating in cyber space to the point of dividing the community.

"Let's not allow differences of ideology, narrow thinking or self interest to cause sensitive issues like the sanctity of Islam, sovereignty of the royal rulers, communities' special rights, laws and the Islamic religion itself to be debated in an uncivil manner on the social websites, thus eliciting negative perceptions."

The Sultan said this in his speech read out by the Raja Muda Kedah, Tan Sri Tunku Sallehuddin Sultan Badlishah at the opening of the First Meeting, Fifth Session of the 13th Kedah State Legislative Assembly at Wisma Darul Aman, here, today.

The Sultan said currently various information could be obtained freely without any screening system to enable differentiation between what was right and what was false.

He said the use of the (mobile) phone and other gadgets had become a culture, which saw over 17 million of this country's population having access to cyber space, with half of them having Facebook accounts.

"Consequently, slander and false stories become viral and widely spread, and this scenario has become a virus, causing havoc, confusing and dividing the people, and destroying brotherhood which had long been beautifully established," Sultan Abdul Halim said.

In the context of the state's development, the Sultan expressed pride over Kedah being among the early initiators in the promotion of educational advancement, especially Islamic religious education.

"This has been proven through the pondok education system which has been upgraded, and one of the results is the establishment of Maahad Tahfiz Sains in Kulim," he said.

The Kedah Sultan also commended the state government under the leadership of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah which is seen as consistently drawing up pro-people policies, for example, through the Kedah People's Aid (BARAKAH) programme, with over 100,000 people in the state benefiting from it since it was introduced in April, 2016.

"I am also impressed with the menteri besar's effort of making honing of human capital skills as a main policy of the state, although the Gen Y makes up only 38 per cent of the state's population. However, I understand that the state government is focusing more on the young generation in 40 per cent of the policies being implemented," he said.

The Sultan said programmes such as the Kedah Undergraduates Internship (IMAN), BARAKAH tuition, undergraduates association incentive, Young Entrepreneurs Micro Credit Scheme and Kedah Darul Aman Sports (SUKDA) which focused on young people were implemented well.

The Sultan also noted that the Padang Terap Rubber City project, with an initial investment of RM417 million channelled by the federal government, would create economic spill-overs and new prospects for 40,000 rubber tappers in the state.

"I understand that through the Evaluation Management Lab recently set up, an additional allocation has been approved for the drawing up of the development of Phase One, which will begin next year," the Sultan said.

The state assembly sitting resumes at 9am tomorrow.

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