

Unity Government continues upholding Islam, empower Muslims

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KUALA LUMPUR: Efforts and initiatives to uphold the status of Islam and empower Muslims in the country will continue to be strengthened under the Unity Government through various agendas lined up in accordance with the Federal Constitution.

Senior lecturer at the Research Centre for Usuluddin and Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Dr Yusri Mohamad Ramli, said this is evident through the close cooperation between the Malay Rulers and the government in safeguarding the interests of Muslims through the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Malaysia (MKI).

He said the MKI, chaired by the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, and directly overseen by the Conference of Rulers, with its deputy chairman being Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has been regarded as an authoritative and institutionalised advisory body.

"This demonstrates the close cooperation between the Malay Rulers and the Unity Government, which serves as the heart of the people in safeguarding the interests of Muslims and preventing Islam from being politicised and threatened by any party.

"The close collaboration between the monarchy and the government signifies the high status of Islam in this country, thus validating Islam as the official religion of the Federation as stated in the Constitution," he told Bernama.

Yusri said the government's commitment to developing Muslims can also be seen through efforts to mainstream Tahfiz education through the National Tahfiz Education Policy Action Plan (DPTN) 2.0, Guidelines for Tahfiz Institution Management, and an additional allocation of RM150 million to registered Tahfiz schools and Islamic boarding institutions under the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim).

He said he sees these policies and financial support as an investment in the future for the development of tahfiz education in the country, which ensures that tahfiz schools operate effectively and provide more comfortable facilities for students.

"For decades, tahfiz education has often been considered second-class and relied on financial assistance from various parties to manage their operations, which also impacts the comfort and safety of students.

"However, with the government's focus and attention, Tahfiz education is now seen as a driving force to produce more religious experts who possess relevant skills in accordance with current demands, as well as to cultivate scholars guided by Islam," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM) chairman, Datuk Dr Muhammad Nur Manuty, said the Unity Government is always championing Islamic education and the Prime Minister himself had always held knowledge-sharing events, including inviting renowned religious scholars or ulama and intellectuals to Seri Perdana in Putrajaya.

In fact, he said the government had also organised Selawat and Munajat Perdana programmes at the Kuala Lumpur Football Stadium, which was attended by over 15,000 people earlier this year and deemed successful in fostering closer relationships between the people, leaders and Islamic scholars.

"The impact of such programmes goes beyond showcasing Islam as a symbol of religion; it also serves as a guide for people to practice in their daily lives, which is the primary goal for Muslims," he added.

Muhammad Nur said the government's commitment to uphold the status of Islam was also reflected in Budget 2023 which saw RM150 million being allocated for the maintenance of public religious schools, tahfiz schools and registered Islamic boarding institutions.

He added that the government had also increased the allowance for 35,000 Kelas Agama and Fardu Ain (KAFA) teachers by RM100, bringing the total allowance to RM1,100, besides the special aid of RM600 for Imam, Bilal, Tok Siak, Noja, Marbut and Takmir teachers, with an allocation of over RM40 million. – Bernama