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English News

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USM BOLSTERS EFFORT TOWARDS RACIAL INTEGRATION



KUALA LUMPUR, May 2015 – The concept of 'desasiswa' or student hostels as practiced in Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) reflects how the caring and harmonious values evident in rural communities can be applied extensively and effectively. USM would continue to enhance and strengthen such longstanding practices through research efforts in establishing an early 'warning system' if such a need arises.

The Vice-Chancellor of USM, Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman said this in his speech at the Seminar on Nation-building and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia (*Seminar Pembinaan Bangsa: Warisan, Watan dan Wawasan Hubungan Etnik di Malaysia*) at the Flamingo Hotel, Ampang, Kuala Lumpur recently.

He said that, the young people who live together, have interactions with each other and understand the various cultures beyond geographical boundaries, speech dialects, languages and even their daily practices, religion and other norms need to be the bridging element and the leading mechanism towards achieving this aspiration.

"USM has continuously supported this effort and hopes that the current cooperation between the Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN) and the School of Social Sciences, USM in organising this seminar can be sustained in the future, especially the Roundtable Discussion Session which involves the youths sharing their ideas to uphold this noble effort," Omar said.

He said, such an effort becomes meaningful through direct interactions during lectures and tutorials, laboratory sessions, extramural activities, team efforts, sports and recreational activities among others, where universal values can be imparted and allowed to flourish in institutions of higher learning.

"At the same time, a sense of unity can be further promoted through research work and the enculturation of knowledge, with academic discussions based on data and facts in guiding the youth to be involved in healthy dialogues, allowing them to explore issues not just with their emotions, and value the various cultures and viewpoints," stressed Omar to the 250 presenters and participants attending the programme from throughout the country.



The Dean of the School of Social Sciences USM, Associate Professor Dr. Nor Malina Malek said, the seminar programme is one avenue whereby the School can cement the constructive proposals resulting from the viewpoints of the young people.

"This programme will provide a new catalyst in compiling the ideas and views of the youth, in the shaping of a more amicable multi-racial society, which is composed of various ethnicities and which therefore requires the sensitivity and subtlety in managing the different communities to bring harmony to the society," said Nor Malina.

The Dean of the School of Social Sciences USM also hopes that in the future, more programmes focusing on ethnic relations can be organised to attract more young people to share their views and ideas, to raise the awareness and to uphold the long-practised sense of unity," she said in concluding the interview with TVUSM.



Meanwhile, Associate Professor Dr. Sivamurugan A/L Pandian, who lectures at the School of Social Sciences, USM, described this seminar as being able to add more value and meaning to the idea of unity to the young people, with the compilation of views and opinions towards making improvements in ethnic relations and unity in the country.

"The Roundtable Discussion session has proven that the ideas of the young people are constructive and profound, which can be utilised as useful inputs in improving this endeavour, and which I feel can be more productive if there is a training programme set up for the young people, to assist them in dealing with the social changes and for them to become icons in society," said the well-known political analyst.

He added that various seminar series discussing different themes would be held with the cooperation of Majlis Profesor Negara (MPN), as the effort towards strengthening racial integration is non-periodic in nature, and requires a continuous approach, with the university playing a fundamental role in the realisation towards ethnic integration in the country.

The three-day seminar from 10 May 2015 was organised by the Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN) with the cooperation of Majlis Profesor Negara (MPN) and School of Social Sciences, USM. - Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin/Text: Siti Naquiah Abdillah/Editing: Mohamad Abdullah/Photos: Muhammad Firdaus Khiruddin



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