

Religious Affairs Minister Asks Politicians Not Do Religious Politicking

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Religious Affairs Minister, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, called on politicians not to do religious politicking in order to get votes during the legislative and presidential elections in 2019. He viewed this issue may trigger conflicts among society who has so far been known as tolerant, whilst respecting diversity and upholding religious value highly.

“Let’s do politics by examining the essence of religions from their universal values, upholding justice, respecting and protecting human rights,” said the Minister after becoming keynote speaker in the International Symposium on Religious Life on Wednesday (7/11) in Novotel Hotel Yogyakarta. The event hosted by Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) was a collaboration with the Religious Affairs Ministry and was attended by religious leaders and humanists from 15 nations.

According to the Minister, each religion is essentially similar in terms of its basic teaching. “As a religious society, we cannot leave our basic religious teaching, because we lead our lives in orientation of those teachings,” he said.

This was shared by researcher from ICRS, Dicky Sofjan, who said that religion ought not to be used

for political interests to grab power. "Let's not downplay the religion, but the spirit of that religious teaching should be implemented," he said.

In response to the international symposium, the Minister acknowledged the theme of the symposium was relevant to the religious life in Indonesia and the world. "I'm appreciative that this theme is relevant not just for Indonesia but also the world," he said.

He added the results of the symposium could generate recommendation for government's reference, religious leaders, humanists, and academics. "These can be followed up by the government, academics, religious leaders, and humanists," he said.

Jan Figel, EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief, said in his speech that Indonesia was one of the reference of Muslim countries that have successfully guaranteed freedom of religion and maintained plurality well. "I think this is inseparable from the existence of Pancasila that prioritises the dignity of human beings," he said.

Meanwhile, Paul Marshall from Baylor University and Hudson Institute, U.S., said freedom of religion became a serious problem in several countries such as Myanmar, India, and the Middle East. In his opinion, governments in each region needs to rule that the religious lives between believers can co-exist. "Human beings should respect each other, place freedom of life as a form of respect of human right," he said.

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