

Afghan Ulema Learn about Pancasila

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YOGYAKARTA - As many as 12 noted ulemas from 12 provinces in Afghanistan visited the campus of UGM to learn Pancasila. In their visit which is led by Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) chairperson, they discussed with experts from UGM to know more about interfaith tolerance in the country.

Rector of UGM, Prof. Dr. Pratikno, M.Soc., Sc, said the Afghan delegation was purposely visiting to learn more about Indonesian ideology, Pancasila, and multicultural lives of Indonesians. "As the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesian Muslims can live together with non-Muslims. Even the Borobudur and Prambanan temples here are the heritage of Budha and Hindu," said Pratikno when receiving the Afghan delegates in the multimedia room on Thursday (19/9).

Explaining UGM as a university that accepts young generation from every faith, ethnic group and culture, UGM has the mandate to develop science and technology for the state's progress. UGM is also mandated to maintain culture, tolerance and multicultures. "As such, there are the Centre for Pancasila Studies here as well as Interfaith and cross-cultural study program, and Centre for Security and Peace Studies," he said.

Senior researcher in the Centre for Pancasila Studies UGM, Prof. Dr. Sutaryo, said Indonesia and Afghanistan both have the majority of Muslim populations. The difference was that Indonesia has over 800 culture



diversities and 500 languages that are united by Pancasila. “In Afghanistan, the problem is not a problem of religion but the political and social conditions that has split them,” he added.

Dr. Fazal Gahani, chairman of the Afghan delegates, said the condition there is now unlike what has been reported in the media saying that there are still ongoing war, suicide bombing and sectarian conflict. In his opinion, every ulema in Afghanistan in his sermon always asks people to maintain peace.

“Among ulemas, we always ask all ulemas to unite and give understanding to the people to follow suit,” he said.

He added that the majority of Afghan people aspire for peace, but the infiltration of foreign nations has made sectarian conflicts unending. Those nations are even competing over oil and geothermal resources. “Many mining resources have not been explored due to security issues,” he added.

Apart from inviting Islamic NGOs and UGM academia to contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan, he also expected UGM to assist education there as the country is still lacking of educators. “We’re lacking of lecturers and teachers, I assume that Indonesia can help lecturers and teachers to study here,” he said.

Similar statement is given by Shafiullah Sahfi, ulema from Nooristan province, that expects Islamic NGOs to immediately assist peace process there. “In 2014, foreign troops will exit from Afghanistan. Many people are happy, but some are worried that the exit would make the country insecure,” he added.

Deputy Secretary General of PBNU, Abdul Munim, said the 12 Afghan ulemas were brought to Indonesia to learn more about Pancasila that is believed to be the unifying factor of the diverse Indonesia. “They know Indonesia lives in harmony due to Pancasila. They want to learn as Afghanistan with only one religion cannot live in harmony,” said Munim alongside the visit.

Besides UGM, said Munim, the Afghan ulemas visit Islamic boarding schools in Surabaya and Yogyakarta and meeting religious leaders.

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