

More dialogues needed to boost religious harmony

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KOTA KINABALU: There is a need for dialogues among academicians to identify similarities and differences among the religions towards enhancing interreligious understanding and harmony.

Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia deputy director Professor Datin Dr Azizan Baharuddin said it was important for Malaysians to be open and discuss the subject to boost unity and harmony in a multi-religious society like Malaysia.

"We sometimes are too proud about ourselves and our beliefs, but are we listening to the other good things about the other religions? This is why we need to start having dialogues, not to debate but to find the best solution to strengthen unity.

"Academicians should play their part by having more dialogues to discuss current situation and finding a formula to solve social problems," she said during the keynote address at the launching of National Conference on Religion and Community at



Dr Azizan

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) yesterday.

"It is crucial to accept each other and not be too judgmental and negative of other people's belief," he said.

Azizan said there is a platform to discuss how to handle problems in the community where every religious institution would play their part without offending other religions.

She said that with more open dialogues, everyone would have the chance to talk, share, listen and learn.

"Having dialogues with other people will provide better understanding; it doesn't mean we have to change our religion. We cannot be separated from religion, so dialogue is the most important component in achieving our vision to live in harmony and peace.

"We already have the hardware, and it is a matter of installing the right software to society. We have smartphones and high technological gadgets, but it is about our responsibility in spreading good discussions about our religion to the social media," she said.

Meanwhile, UMS vice chancellor Datuk Mohd Harun Abdullah said communication skills were important elements in having an effective dialogue.

"Dialogues are not only during formal events, but there is also a need to start a virtual forum in cyberspace," he said.

Harun's speech was read by UMS deputy vice-chancellor of research and innovation Professor Dr Shahril Yusof.