

Hindu Sangam discusses community issues with PAS leaders

THE Malaysia Hindu Sangam met with PAS leaders to discuss issues affecting the Hindu community, reported *Makkal Osai*.

Association president Datuk RS Mohan Shan said the meeting was held after an invitation by PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang. Mohan was speaking at the association's 43rd annual general meeting, which was attended by

400 delegates.

A wide range of issues involving the Hindu community was discussed with Abdul Hadi, during the meeting, including religious conversions and M. Indira Gandhi's missing daughter.

Mohan said the association has also applied for RM15mil in government relief to help Hindu temples struggling without income during the movement control order.

He noted that RM5mil had been approved through the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra) and the committee was working to obtain the funds, he said.

During the meeting, the association gave out RM5,500 in scholarships to two sisters who had applied for education assistance.

> More than 45 volunteers from the local community came together

to clear growth and jungle surrounding SJK(T) Menglembu, in Ipoh, to ensure a safe environment for students, *Makkal Osai* reported.

The Perak school's former students club president, who was only identified as Arun, said he came up with the idea to organise the gotong royong after hearing about snakes, monitor lizards and wild boars entering the school compound.

It pays to accept each other's faiths

Understanding nation's various creeds can foster greater unity, say religious leaders

KUALA LUMPUR: A better understanding of each other's religions can help foster unity, say several religious leaders.

"I hope we can change our views, as religions can unite the nation and its people," said Christian Federation of Malaysian chairman Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim.

"All religions teach the betterment of society, but at times problems arise due to interpretation.

"Conflicts arise when individuals or groups fail to better understand the religious practices of others," he said at a Rukun Negara forum yesterday.

He said that understanding the religious practices of one's neighbours could help avoid tensions.

"What is important is that we can practise our respective religions while respecting others," he said, citing the forum as an example where religious leaders were able to sit together and discuss matters rationally.

Malaysia Hindu Sangam assistant secretary Gowri PS Thangaya said the first principle of "belief in God" should not merely be recited as part of the Rukun Negara.

"It must be inculcated in the lives of Malaysians at a tender age and it should begin not in schools but at home," she said, adding that this responsibility should be shouldered by all Malaysians.

Perlis mufti Datuk Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin said there might be disagreement in



Mutual respect: (From left) Gowri, Leow, Sedar Institute adviser Datuk Dr Dominic Lau, Mohd Asri, Santhara, Federation of Taoist Associations Malaysia president Dao Zhang Tan Hoe Chiew and Sing.

each other's beliefs, but it was important to have respect for one another's religion.

"In the national context, there must be space for one to practise his or her own religion," he said.

Buddhist Association of Malaysia charity and welfare department head Ven Sing Kan reminded Malaysians to avoid using divisive words or resorting to hate speeches and lies

where religion was concerned.

"We must develop the right speech, which is constructive and beneficial in inculcating unity," he said.

Earlier, in his speech when opening the forum, Federal Territories Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Dr Edmund Santhara said Malaysians should understand their own religion and that of others.



"This will bring better understanding and respect among the communities, resulting in stronger unity," he said.

He cited efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19 as an example where Malaysians had united and adhered to the government's rules with open hearts, despite restrictions imposed on gatherings at houses of worship.

The Rukun Negara was instituted by royal proclamation on Aug 31, 1970, as a means to foster unity among the races, in the wake of the May 13, 1969 racial riots.

Several programmes and events are being held to mark the occasion this year.