A tinderbox waiting to ignite

Anti-gay campaign will cause hate groups to come out of the closet, says don

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THE anti-lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGBT) campaign organised by Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM) might be the spark that sets off a powder keg of negative reaction against sexual minorities.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Institute of Ethnic Studies founder and director Datuk Dr Shamsul Amri Baharuddin said the Malaysian public in general is not as liberal minded as the West when it comes to such sexual orientation.

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Dr Shamsul Amri told The Malay Mail.

"There will be a lot of reaction to this, especially from the more moral and ethical groups who thinks that this (different sexual orientations) is not healthy. There are more negative reaction groups compared to the more supportive groups."

He pointed out that there has been many lelaki lembut (softies) in universities over the years but it was never publicised until the issue was brought out of the closet with the amount of coverage received by the Seksualiti Merdeka celebration recently.

The Kelantan Education Department had come under fire last year for a programme to send "softies" to boot camp.

However, regardless of the situation, Shamsul Amri believes the minority groups must also respect the sensitivity of the majority.

Meanwhile, Universiti Malaysia's Department of Psychological Medicine Professor Dr Mohamad Hussain Habil believes that a concerted campaign by JMM against LGBTs will only exacerbate the challenges they already face.

"The local LGBT community is already under pressure, with some suffering from depression and other problems due to the stifling conditions," he said.

"Some find it hard to accept it for themselves, let alone from others." He added that the move to 'rehabilitate' the gay community also sends the wrong message of non-acceptance and that it is something that can be 'cured'.

"Groups like JMM are out to gain political mileage by sensationalising this issue, which is a dangerous move at the expense of the LGBT community," he said.

"Homosexuality has always been around. Why does JMM feel the need to highlight it more than ever now?"

Malaysian Association of Psychotherapy president Dr Edward Chan said it isn't necessary to institutionalise hatred, as diversity should be celebrated.

"In these cases, it's more important to provide support and help them gain acceptance, as they are still human beings who can contribute meaningfully to society," he said.

"To exclude minority groups would go against the 1Malaysia concept to begin with."