KUALA LUMPUR: In recommending hate speeches to be criminalised for unity to be restored, academician Shad Saleem Faruqi (pic) also believes that race and religion-based political parties must open their doors to others.

At the first consultation with youths on national unity, organised by the Asian Law Students’ Association of Malaysia (Alsa), Akademi Belia and the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM), Faruqi, who is also UiTM’s legal advisor said hate speeches polarises communities and often leads to violence.

As such, Faruqi said existing provisions in the Penal Code, Communications and Multimedia Act, Printing Presses and Publications Act and the Sedition Act should be supported by a national harmony or race and religious relations or maintenance of religious harmony act.

“The dominant purpose of this law should be to bring parties together through conciliation. Sanctions should be the last resort,” said Faruqi.

He added that the approach must be three-pronged, first, for a mechanism for whistle blowers to be present, a machinery of trained people in dialogue and conciliation, as well as sanctions not necessarily in the form of jail time.

“Sanctions can be through social services,” he said.

He also said hate speeches on the internet in particular, can damage inter-ethnic relations.

“The internet can both be an instrument of great knowledge as well as creating negative impact.”

When asked if social media should be regulated as well, Faruqi gave an answer in the affirmative.

“People should not use social media to hurt people’s feelings which may only incite violence. As such, they should be required to disclose their identities when commenting on an issue online,” he said.

On how race and religion-based political parties should open up to others, Faruqi cited Umno founder Onn Jaafar who had proposed for the party to open its doors to non-Malays as associate members.

“He was a visionary who sacrificed his political career for this cause.”

Faruqi also touched on the idea of associate membership of race and religious parties, and how it had been put forward in some states.

“In the 70s, the idea of an Alliance Direct Membership Organisation (Admo) was revived but did not go anywhere. I think it is time to allow these ideas to germinate.”

“In this day and age of humanism, race and religious polarisation as well as race and religious discrimination are odd,” he said.