

The Batu Pahat incident

Reason to probe groups: Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Government would have to look into the activities of "dakwah" groups to make sure they were genuine, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

This, he said, was necessary to make sure that "dakwah" groups were not being used as a front for illegal activities.

"There are many genuine and non-genuine dakwah groups," he added.

"It is difficult to tell if a group is going to be violent. If we had acted earlier, the people would have accused the Government of suppressing religious freedom in the country," he added.

Now that the Batu Pahat incident had occurred, he added, the Government can act decisively.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was speaking to Pressmen after visiting the International

The fanatics of Batu Pahat, he said, belonged to a "lunatic fringe," found in every society.

But the incident did not mean the situation would get out of hand, he added.

The fanatics formed only a small number but they showed they could do harm, he said.

On the involvement of settled refugees in deviationist Muslim activities, he said there was no need for the Government to investigate all others who

had been offered settlement in the country.

These people were transients and the Government would see they did not dabble in matters which were not their concern.

The Government would see to it that they did not run wild while they were in the country.

Decisions

He also said the Government would consider suggestions that religious laws be standardised under the Federal Government, but added

that this would depend on the various State Governments' decisions.

Religion, he said, was a State Government affair and the Federal Government could not take away this power without the agreement of the various State legislatures.

● FANATIC LEADER WAS LATE CONVERT: P 24

Furniture Fair at the Changkat Pavilion here this evening. He was accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah.

On the Batu Pahat incident, he said it now gave the Government a reason to investigate "dakwah" groups, to weed out deviants from the true missionary activities.