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Keating-apology

MORE ORGANISATIONS DEMAND APOLOGY FROM KEATING

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 25 (Bernama) -- A Pulau Pinang-based human rights group, Just World Trust (JUST), today called on Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating to apologise to his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for calling him a "recalcitrant".

"It is against etiquette and courtesy in inter-state relations for the leader of one country to use pejorative, derogatory language against the leader of another country," JUST director Dr Chandra Muzaffar said in a statement.

Keating made the remark when commenting on Dr Mahathir's absence from the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum informal meeting of heads of government in Seattle.

Dr Chandra said it was perfectly legitimate for leaders to hold different positions on national and international issues but one should not indulge in name-calling. -- more

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He said that as the leader of a country which champions human rights and democracy, Keating should respect Dr Mahathir's right not to attend the summit.

"JUST shares some of Dr Mahathir's apprehensions about the direction that APEC is taking. It is obvious that APEC is being moulded in such a way that the United States would be the 'captain in command' of the dynamic East Asia-Southeast Asia economic ship," he said.

Australia, Dr Chandra said, had for some years now been promoting the US political and economic agenda in the Asian region. -- more

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In IPOH, Perak state executive councillor and Perak MCA Youth leader Dr Song Yong Pheow said the youth movement would send a note to the Australian High Commission protesting against Keating's remark.

He said the Perak MCA Youth wanted Keating and the Australian media to apologize to Dr Mahathir.

He said the Perak MCA Youth supported the call by Umno Youth for Malaysia to boycott goods from Australia, not visit that country, cease sending Malaysian students there and review Australia's investments in Malaysia if the apology was not made.

Dr Song said Australia had been partial and had criticised Malaysia and Dr Mahathir several times. He said Australia had gone too far by its actions and that the government should take serious action. -- more

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The Press Secretaries Club of Malaysia said Keating's remark was hurting.

Club president Encik Ibrahim Tamby Chik described the remark as an uncivilised act and called on Keating to apologize.

He said the club members would choose to deny cooperation to Australian journalists who wanted information or wished to interview Malaysian ministers.

The Malaysian Malay Journalists Association (PWM) condemned in the strongest terms the Australian media reports, saying they had smeared the image of Malaysia.

PWM president Encik Yazid Othman said the articles were not only derogatory but also ran contrary to journalists' code of ethics in the civilised world to which Australia also belonged.

"By humiliating Dr Mahathir, the Australian mass media has committed grave professional misconduct," he said. -- Bernama

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