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Call to act firmly against violent demonstrators

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers today called on the security authorities to act firmly against demonstrators who resorted to violence.

They said their actions were not acceptable to peace-loving Malaysians.

In Kuantan, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said the action by the unruly demonstrators in front of the Kampung Baru mosque in Kuala Lumpur was undemocratic.

"The action by the rioters who threw stones, bottles and sticks, injuring several policemen, was not the way to go against the Government.

"If this is the way they show their anger, there can be chaos in the country," Mohd Khalil said, adding that action should be taken against them.

He said if the demonstrators wanted to go against the Government, they should wait for the next general election as the current government would still be in control until 2000.

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said Malaysians should reject violent behaviour.

He said the demonstrations had taken on a new dimension which included violence and this was something that must not be allowed to continue.

He said it was clear that police had been exercising restraint over the demonstrations and had been lenient against those involved.

"It looks like the demonstrators are provoking the police to act sternly against them."

He appealed to the people not to provoke the police and not to be involved in any demonstration which could jeopardise the country's stability.

In Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon called on sacked Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's supporters to launch a mass signature campaign to express their opinions to the Government, instead of resorting to violence.

He said a signature campaign would serve as a peaceful alternative to the frequent demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur.

"Violence will only jeopardise national security and is also disruptive to economic recovery efforts.

"I have always stressed the need for us to preserve peace and stability," said Koh, who felt the demonstrators could have been misled.

In Malacca, Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, who is also State Umno liaison chief, said those involved in the riots should be dealt with severely.

"These people are just too much. They are actually challenging the authorities to act against them."

Abu Zahar said the authorities should not be "soft" against the rioters for the sake of the country's stability.

In Kota Baru, Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat today reiterated his stand on the need for discussion among all the parties involved to put an end to the so-called "reformasi" demonstrations and illegal gatherings.

"All the three parties ... if possible, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim himself, the police and the party who sacked him (Anwar), need to sit down and discuss the matter."

He added that Anwar, like Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad,

had been acclaimed as an international leader.

"Like the Prime Minister, Anwar, too, has many supporters and they may not be able to accept the sudden curb being imposed on them from voicing their dissatisfaction.

"It is just like water flowing from the hill ... if nothing is made to prevent the flow, the water will spill over to the villages."

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