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Dr M: Be tolerant to ensure racial harmony

GRIK, Sat.- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians must be moderate and tolerant to ensure the various races continue to live in harmony.

Although misunderstandings could occur between the races, there was no cause to fear that such problems would lead to racial riots.

Referring to the skirmishes yesterday in Kampung Rawa, Penang, between two groups of different faiths resulting in police having to fire tear gas to disperse them, he said it was an isolated case and confined only to the area.

Speaking at the opening of the Grik Umno division meeting, Dr Mahathir said since the 1969 racial riots, the Government had taken effective measures and the people had learnt to be moderate and tolerant.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, said the BN had introduced policies that had proved acceptable to all races.

This was evidenced by the good relations and co-operation among the races today.

He said although certain quarters believed the May 13 incident could recur, the people had proven them wrong.

Dr Mahathir said the cordial relations enjoyed by the races had enabled the Government to implement the New Economic Policy with the support of all races.

Earlier in Jeli, Dr Mahathir urged the people not to let such incidents to recur. "If there are problems, let's discuss them."

The Prime Minister said this at a Press conference after a meet-the-people session and the opening of the Umno Jeli divisional delegates' meeting.

In Bukit Mertajam, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim reminded the people to follow regulations and procedures and not resort to the law of the jungle to resolve problems.

He also called on the relevant authorities to act on sensitive matters immediately and not allow disputes to simmer. Discussions and negotiations should not be allowed to drag on too long, he said.

Anwar said those responsible for security should take firm action against the perpetrators of conflicts, regardless of their race or religion.

He advised Malaysians not to get emotional about issues or to believe rumours but to ascertain the facts and act according to the law.

"There is a lesson in this for everyone. For the Muslims the lesson is that they should follow procedures and the proper channels to take up grievances.

"For Hindus and others, it is that they should not build their houses of worship anywhere they like."

Anwar was opening the Permatang Pauh Umno division delegates conference where he was returned unopposed as chairman.

He said Prophet Muhammad had shown tolerance and fairness even to his enemies and Islam insisted that differences in colour and race be transcended.

"Muslims must accept that there is a place for mosques, temples and churches in Malaysia. Muslims must accept that there are Malaysians of different races and religious backgrounds.

"Other Malaysians, including Hindus, must remember that they cannot build temples as and where they like. No country allows such things."

In Penang, State police chief Datuk Abdul Hamid Mustapha said all processions, whether of a religious nature or otherwise were prohibited after the Kampung Rawa incident.

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