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Common stand in condemning abuse of religion

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed all Barisan Nasional Members of Parliament to take a common stand in condemning quarters who make use of religion to pursue their self-interest.

Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Datuk Muhamad Abdullah said the Prime Minister also reminded the MPs on the importance of preserving unity in the country.

"Dr Mahathir said there should not be a situation where one religion is seen as suppressing another.

"There should not also be a case where one race suppresses another," said Muhamad when asked what transpired during the pre-council meeting chaired by Dr Mahathir at Parliament.

(Pre-council meetings are usually held for Barisan Nasional MPs before each Parliament sitting).

Muhamad said the Prime Minister made the call in response to the arms heist and hostage-taking incident in Sauk, Perak, which ended on Friday with the surrender and capture of 27 members of the Al-Ma'unah movement.

After being surrounded for five days by the police and army, they eventually gave up, but not before killing two of their four hostages.

Fifteen members of the movement had on July 2 raided two army posts in Grik and escaped with more than 100 high-calibre weapons and ammunition.

Another MP said Dr Mahathir had voiced his concern on the danger facing the country if extremism was continually espoused by certain sections of the people.

"It is a very sensitive issue as religion is involved ... the Prime Minister has called on all Malaysians to play their role in ensuring that those promoting violence have no place in our society," he said.

Meanwhile, taking the Prime Minister's cue, MPs are expected to debate on the danger of extremism in society and the need for increased surveillance and monitoring of silat groups which dabbled in mystical powers.

Backbencher Club chairman Datuk Jamaluddin Jarjis had submitted a motion for Dewan Rakyat proceedings, which is in session now, to be adjourned tomorrow to allow the issue be debated.

He said groups like the Al-Ma'unah could harm the country if their activities were left unchecked.

Although Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Mohamed Zahir Ismail had today rejected a motion by an Opposition MP for the House to discuss the Grik arms heist, Jamaluddin said he was confident that his motion would be allowed as the threat by movements like Al-Ma'unah was very real.

The motion is also intended for MPs to express their gratitude to the army and police for ending the Grik incident without a bloodbath and to extend their condolences to the families of the policeman and army ranger executed by the robbers.

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