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Pahang Sultan first to act (HL)

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PEKAN, Sat. - The Sultan of Pahang today became the first State Ruler to outline his plans to help reunite the Malays, saying he will visit all 11 districts to convince the community of the need to bury their differences.

Sultan Ahmad Shah said he would first initiate a muzakarah (discussion) among the ulama in the State, regardless of their political inclination, before holding meetings with other sections of the community, including mosque officials.

"The meetings will feature prominently during my visits to the districts."

He said the topic of the proposed muzakarah was not discussed at the just concluded two-day Conference of Rulers meeting in Kuala Lumpur, which he chaired.

At a Press conference held at his office, Sultan Ahmad Shah gave a lengthy explanation on the need for the Malays to subscribe to the true teachings of Islam and for them to realise the effect of fighting among themselves.

"Why are we resorting to unIslamic actions like spreading lies and verbally abusing others?"

Saying he was ashamed to see the Muslims fighting among themselves to achieve certain interests, the Sultan said this kind of situation had never occurred throughout his 25-year rule.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said yesterday that the Conference of Rulers had agreed to help strengthen unity among the Malays who were divided due to political differences and affiliations.

Dr Mahathir had said he had briefed the Rulers during the Conference on Thursday on the situation in the country, particularly among the Muslims who were facing some problems.

The Prime Minister said the Rulers had voiced their concern on the matter and gave an assurance that they would come up with some remedial measures to reunite the community.

Touching on the unity-related problems, the Sultan of Pahang said today: "I have been thinking over and over again on what has caused this. I feel the State Government has been able to meet public expectations.

"Requests for infrastructure like schools, roads, bridges, rural clinics, water and electricity have all been met according to financial capabilities.

"Everything has been planned and implemented so that the people can live in peace and prosperity," he said.

The Sultan said unauthorised ceramah in mosques, especially those not related to religion, should not have taken place.

"The general election is over, the Government has been formed and leaders have been picked. So, why must these people corrupt the minds of my subjects.

"I do not want the State population, especially villagers, to be subjected to absurd threats. They have to earn a living. The threats scare them and I sympathise with them. I want my subjects to live in peace and harmony.

"My advice to my subjects is not to follow them blindly. What the outsiders are doing in the State is just to suit their own ends," he said.

The Sultan said the role of the media was also vital in helping to unite the ummah (people) and news reports should be based on facts.

The Ruler reminded his subjects that nafsu (lust) was a person's most dangerous enemy while slander was a very sinful act.

"The sanctity of Islam and its capability to unite the ummah has received world recognition. During haj seasons, Muslims from all over the world set aside their status, class, background and complexion to congregate in Mecca and this reflects unity," he said.

"Non-Muslims are amazed by the pureness and strength of the bond and they say Muslims are a fortunate lot. But look at us, fighting among ourselves in our own backyard."

He said the Malays should not only develop dignity, resilience, tolerance, caring spirit, trust and responsibility towards each other but also strive for the sake of unity of the ummah.

"We must subscribe to noble values of nation above community and society above self, as these will not only guide us but also inspire us to adopt the right direction towards efforts in uniting the ummah," he said.

Asked what would happen if his advice was ignored, Sultan Ahmad Shah said the Constitution of Pahang empowered the Ruler, as custodian of Islam in the State, to issue directives for additional laws so that religious matters could be carried out in an orderly manner.

"However, we in Malaysia are not a regimented society. We can think of other means to unite the Malays. The most important thing is that we should not go overboard in anything we do."

He said he was aware that many among his subjects had described him as a "uniting force" and he would try to "fit into the shoes".

"I believe God will give His blessing if one's intentions are good and sincere."

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