

10/04/2000

PM: Violation of law is unhealthy

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he saw a trend towards the use of force by the Opposition in its political activities.

Such violation of the laws if left unchecked would one day make Malaysia like some countries where disgruntled groups riot.

Dr Mahathir had been asked to comment on an incident in Temerloh on Friday where two Umno grassroots leaders were assaulted by Opposition supporters in a mosque.

Kampung Teluk Ira Umno branch chairman Mat Pilus Mat Taha, 58, was punched in the face while he was shaking hands with members of the congregation inside the village mosque after Friday prayers.

Branch secretary Ahmad Salleh, 47, was also assaulted by a supporter of the Opposition when he arrived at the mosque.

"I am worried this will escalate until there are clashes and maybe bloodshed.

"If we are to do anything, it must be done now before it spreads," Dr Mahathir told reporters after a demonstration ride aboard a British Royal Marines' hovercraft at the Mines Beach Resort Hotel.

He also said he had heard that Parti Keadilan Nasional planned to hold a demonstration on April 15 to "remember something".

"They are preparing to beat the police, carry weapons, sticks and other things and also Molotov cocktails.

"I see a trend towards use of force. This violation of laws is not healthy.

"One day we will become like other countries where whenever one group is not happy they will riot."

Asked what action could be taken, Dr Mahathir said the Government appealed to people to behave.

"Don't do this kind of thing. In other countries, this can be done. Here, we are open to criticism. There is the Parliament.

"There are Opposition Members of Parliament unlike some countries where there are no Opposition members.

The Opposition Members of Parliament here are very fierce.

"What more do you want?"

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi expressed disappointment over the assault on the two Umno grassroots leaders, saying "gangsterism and hooliganism" had no place in Malaysian politics.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, said police reports had been lodged and investigations had commenced.

"Assault is an offence that is punishable under the Penal Code. However, action taken against them should not be construed as a backlash against the Opposition.

"There should be no accusations saying we are taking action against the Opposition.

"Action is only taken for their wrongdoings. I do not want the people to think we are up to something, especially since those who started this are from the Opposition," Abdullah told reporters after attending the Federal police headquarters' Family Day at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa.

He said he was disappointed that people could indulge in such rough and unbecoming behaviour over politics.

"It should not have occurred as the country practises democracy. There are ways the people can voice their opinions in accordance with the law ... they don't have to resort to fistfights.

"Such behaviour should be totally avoided."

In Pekan, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Pas leaders must condemn and take immediate disciplinary action against their members who assaulted the two men.

He said if nothing was done by the Opposition leaders, it would create a picture where the Pas leaders themselves gave their blessings to such a case.

"However, I think this incident gives a positive picture towards Umno as it shows that Umno members are still patient and steadfast in facing the tactics used by Pas supporters," he said.

In Kuantan, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob urged party members to stay calm and not to emulate what the "other side" had done.

"This will reflect their accountability.

They too are responsible for public order so that people can go on with their lives without any fear," Khalil, who is Kuantan MP, said after launching a community project by Sultan Ahmad Shah Polytechnic at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Ular.

(END)