

26/07/2000

PM: People must know the truth about Sauk incident

Ramlan Said; Patvinder Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Barisan Nasional component parties are going to the people to explain that the killing of a policeman and a soldier in Sauk by members of the Al-Ma'unah group was not a case of hatred against non-Muslims.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he explained to coalition members that the torture and murder of detective sergeant R. Sagadevan and army ranger Mathew anak Medan were purely a criminal act.

The Prime Minister said it was important that members were made aware of what had happened so that they could explain the truth to the rakyat to avoid any misunderstanding that the killings were done in the name of Islam.

"For example, some quarters in Sarawak are angry that an Iban (Mathew) has been killed by Muslims.

"We explained that this was not a case of Muslims attacking an Iban but a criminal act committed by a group of people not supported by the Government and other people," he said, adding that Islam itself did not permit such an act.

Speaking after chairing a BN supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn, the first to be held after the Sauk incident, Dr Mahathir agreed that there were some misunderstandings among non-Muslims on the incident.

"We also realised that that there are Muslims trying to defend the act, giving various reasons, but this is not a case of Muslims going after non-Muslims."

Barisan Nasional comprises 14 political parties. They are peninsula-based Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan and People's Progressive Party; Sarawak-based Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak, Sarawak National Party and Sarawak United People's Party; and Sabah-based United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Organisation, Sabah Progressive Party, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah and Liberal Democratic Party.

Among party leaders present were Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas, PBDS president Datuk Leo Moggie and BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting also discussed the effect of the hate campaign against the Government advocated by the Opposition.

"It has reached a very dangerous level that there are now people willing to act before determining whether allegations against the Government are true or not ... they act out of their hatred and anger."

Dr Mahathir said the importance of enhancing unity and strengthening relations in a multi-racial society was also discussed.

The meeting agreed that the practice of open house during the various festivities should be continued as it could help foster better understanding among the people.

The Prime Minister said party leaders also expressed their concern over the trend at kindergartens where children were taught to hate the Government.

Asked about integration among students at universities, Dr Mahathir said it worried the BN because students of different races were not interacting and the Government was doing its best to overcome the problem.

"We have already asked local universities to have students of different races sharing rooms," he said.

Later, Mohamed said Dr Mahathir's lengthy explanation on the incident was necessary to clear any misconception that Muslims were killing non-Muslims.

He said the hostage-taking incident became an issue as out of the four hostages taken captive, only the two non-Muslims among them were killed.

"This is a very critical issue ... religious strife can be more dangerous than racial strife, so it must be avoided."

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