

31/08/2000

PM: Don't play with fire (HL)

Carolyn Hong

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today appealed to extremists among the Malays and Chinese to stop fanning racial sentiments as this can threaten stability.

Citing the "attacks" of Al Ma'unah and Suqui (Malaysian Chinese Organisations' Election Appeals Committee) as examples, he said these would destroy the good inter-racial relations which the Government had built up.

He said Suqui's approach was the same as Al-Ma'unah's as both tried to hurt the feelings of certain people so as to re-ignite racial sentiments.

"If the Chinese newspapers which like to cause misunderstandings among the moderate Chinese and slanderous Internet websites run by Malays succeed in influencing both races, co-operation will be replaced by confrontation which will jeopardise stability and peace."

He said when it appeared that the Government led by the Malays had become weak and divided, the Chinese extremists began making all kinds of demands which hurt the feelings of the Malays. He said these were people who were not happy with inter-racial co-operation in the country.

"Their actions were not much different from that of the communists who wanted to totally abolish the special status of the Malays in Malaysia," he said in his address to the nation aired over television tonight in conjunction with the 43rd National Day.

Al Ma'unah is a cult group whose members have been charged with waging war, while Suqui had authored an election appeal which included a section on Malay privileges.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays had been split since the anti-Government campaign began to use religion to incite hatred. He said such hatred caused them to become irrational and to ignore the danger of their plans.

"This is what happened when the Al-Ma'unah planned to topple the Government through an armed revolution."

He said the attempt failed but if the hate campaign continued, alongside the misinterpretation of religion, there could be another massive attempt.

Dr Mahathir said fanning feelings of hatred against others in order to gain support for oneself was like playing with fire.

He said if the campaign continued, Malaysia would become like some developing countries which have never enjoyed peace and which relied on former colonial masters for everything.

"Political differences between parties in a democracy should not reach such a level."

He said because political differences had come between them, unity had almost been destroyed and today, they were weak because of the erosion of Malay support for the Government.

The Prime Minister also regretted that there were Malaysians, many of whom were Malays and Muslims, who were not grateful that the country had recovered from the economic crisis with its sovereignty intact.

"They have forgotten Allah's promise that the ungrateful will not receive blessings and the punishment of God will be very painful," he said.

He warned Malaysians not to assume that they will always be able to live luxuriously, freely and with respect.

"That is a false belief," he said, reiterating his oft-repeated reminder that the West had not lost interest in its ambition to colonise other

countries.

He said Malaysians had become so confident of their status and ability that they find it hard to believe they might be colonised again.

Dr Mahathir said foreign non-governmental organisations have got openly involved in the internal affairs of a nation, and Western powers had claimed the right to interfere directly in matters such as human rights and the ruling system.

"They only allow liberal democracy," he said, adding that they now also want to abolish national economic boundaries.

He said if the Government surrendered the economy, its efforts to bring about balanced economic development would come to an end.

"The special rights of the Malays will be abolished."

He said Malaysia had defeated their attempt this time around but this did not mean that they would not try again.

The Government was not interested in the praise of foreigners, he said, and it would continue to rule by legal and democratic principles.

"We will fight the misuse of religion, which along with defamation, have become a means to incite hatred and to fish for votes. We will uphold the purity of Islam by spreading true Islamic teachings.

"We will fight attempts to cause racial riots through extreme demands. We will protect the rights of all races as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

"We will not bow to foreigners, their agencies and their media, however much the pressure on us and our country," he said.

(END)