

13 OCT 2000

Rais-Debate

RAIS DOUBTS OVERALL BENEFIT OF A DEBATE ON MALAY RIGHTS

KUALA KRAWANG, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said today he is doubtful as to the overall benefit of a debate on Malay rights between the Umno and PAS youth leaders but since both sides have agreed to the debate, they should be decorous about it.

He said his argument was that if PAS and Umno began discussing the matter openly, what was to stop the Malays and non-Malays from discussing it.

"So, I think that since the door has been opened, be careful...but if you ask me personally I wouldn't venture to open the floodgates," he told reporters after opening the alternative birth centre at the Simpang Durian Health Clinic, here.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said that a debate on Malay rights between Umno and PAS should be held so that the people would not be confused but added that matters like how the debate should be handled needed to be looked into.

Dr Rais said more problems would arise later on even though there would be benefits as well.

"You will be clearing a lot of air, a lot of problem areas but that is purely tentative. On the other side, there will be problem as well. The human rights angle will be pushed in, the equality view will be pushed in," he said.

Dr Rais said he would like to warn against the legal and human rights repercussion and hoped that those involved in the debate would know their limits and the periphery of logic in discussing the matter.

On the other side, he said, the people must also accept the fact that there would be aspects of the debate which would enlighten the public such as the extent and the actual meaning of Article 153.

"I must stress that under Article 153 (1), the non-Malays' rights are guaranteed as well, but this has never been explained...so this is good in that respect. The debate, I hope, will also highlight that part. All this while we were saying 153 is for the Malays but there's one clause there (stating) that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong safeguards the right of non-Malays," he said.

He said that in debating the issue all parties must be responsible and not violate the laws relating to sedition.

-- BERNAMA

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