

20 JUL 2000

Hate-Reaction

VARIOUS QUARTERS CONDEMN HATE CAMPAIGN AGAINST GOVERNMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 20 (Bernama) -- Groups representing non-Muslims, youths, students, businesses and academics today expressed regret that certain quarters were instigating the people to hate the government as such acts can cause chaos.

They wanted action to be taken against the instigators before they could do further damage to the country.

Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) president Saifuddin Abdullah said the acts of sowing hatred against the government should be stopped by using legal provisions against the culprits.

If left unchecked, such acts could continue to undermine racial unity and encourage others to resort to similar action, he said.

He said this when asked to comment on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that the Gerik arms heist and murder of two hostages in Sauk by the Al-Ma'unah members were the manifestation of politics of hate being perpetrated against the government by certain quarters.

The Prime Minister said these quarters had been doing this for the last 20 to 30 years, resulting in some people even willing to commit violent acts because of their hatred and anger towards the government.

President of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, A. Vaithiligam, said the council was very concerned over the recent incident.

"We are concerned of the incident and we share similar concerns with the Prime Minister. However, we hope all the people of all religions in the country will gather and have proper dialogue as better understanding can reduce tension," he said.

He said only by promoting understanding could ill-feelings between different groups be reduced.

Asked whether non-Muslim groups were worried over the incident, he said: "We are concerned but having worked with many people we found that a large majority of Muslims are understanding and tolerant. I think getting together will probably close the gap."

Vaithiligam, who is also President of the Malaysia Hindu Sangam, hoped the government would set up a religious advisory council to promote understanding among the various groups.

Federal Territory Mufti Datuk Hashim Yahaya said it was "haram" for Muslims to try and destroy places of worship of non-Muslims as Islam is a tolerant religion.

He also said only the authorities were empowered to demolish premises, including places like brewery which are forbidden by Islam.

Peninsular Malaysia Students Federation president Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim said acts of instigating the people to hate the government should be checked before they became more serious.

"It is better to check them from the beginning otherwise the situation might deteriorate into that experienced in a neighbouring country where certain groups have turned violent beyond control," he said.

He said the Islamic Religious Councils should view the matter seriously and monitor the situation at all times.

He regretted that there were some people who were easily influenced by the instigations of certain groups who had their own political agenda.

In JOHOR BAHRU, president of the Johor branch of the Ex-Servicemen's Association of Malaysia, Md Noh Atan said the government should constantly monitor developments within the groups who wanted to create unrest so that such activities could be curbed in the early stage.

He proposed that the Rukun Tetangga (RT) scheme be revived actively in all housing estates in a move to detect unhealthy acts which could lead to

chaos.

Head of Universiti Malaya's Media Studies Department Datuk Dr Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar expressed regret over the attitude of the opposition parties which politicised the Al-Ma'unah issue thus ignoring the interest of the people and nation in general.

He said the opposition should join government efforts in curbing the activities of the deviationist movement in the interest of the people's and country's prosperity, but on the contrary, they were exploiting the issue for their personal and political gains.

President of the Congress of the Unions of Teachers in Education Service, Malaysia, Muhamad Mustapha called on the government to immediately ban the Al-Ma'unah movement and to come out with a White Paper on it.

The authorities should take follow-up action on the decision made regarding the group, he said.

"Meanwhile, I urge all teachers, if they are involved in such movements, to return to the correct path and to repent," Muhamad said.

In ALOR SETAR, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Mohamed Taib when met at a function said that the acts committed by followers of the Al-Ma'unah movement were influenced by the campaigns and ceramahs carried out by PAS to instil hatred against the government which they claimed as unIslamic.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, who was also met in Alor Setar, said the acts by the group who shot at a brewery were aimed at drawing sympathy from the Muslims and this clearly showed the intention of the Al-Ma'unah groups to create chaos as is the case in a neighbouring country.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the people should condemn the acts by followers of the Al-Ma'unah movement who tried to create anarchy in the country.

In SEREMBAN, Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad urged Muslims to beware of groups using Islamic names as a front.

"Otherwise, they will in the end be made use of by such groups," he said.

He also questioned why the opposition had refrained from condemning the Al-Ma'unah group for the brutal murder of two hostages it held after pulling off a weapons heist from two army camps in Perak recently.

In KOTA BAHARU, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat denied that the Al-Ma'unah group was made up of PAS members and said the government should investigate immediately the reasons which led "certain groups" to hate the government.

He said the government could not put the blame on the opposition for the situation arising.

"This trait to hate and to love in human beings is god-given. There must be a reason for this situation to arise," he said.

DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang said the authorities should release full information on the incident of a temple and a brewery being shot at by members of the Al-Ma'unah group.

He said if it was true that three to five Al-Ma'unah people had a grenade launcher and fired at a temple and a brewery in Kuala Lumpur before they were arrested in Sungai Petani, the authorities should explain how they managed to escape the tight security dragnet in going all the way to the Federal capital and to return to Sungai Petani.

-- BERNAMA

TEAM THG