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When hate prevails

IT is a disturbing revelation. Most of the 1,800 members of the deviationist group Brotherhood of Inner Power Through Divine Help, or Al-Ma'unah, are also Pas members.

But they are no ordinary supporters. Beyond the symbols signified by the Pas paraphernalia that were prominently displayed at the Al-Ma'unah centres and, as suggested by the Grik arms heist and the brutal killing of two security personnel, it would appear that the Al-Ma'unah movement is perhaps a manifestation of an irrational extremism and militancy within Pas itself.

In terms of size, it may be a small element. Nevertheless, it is a dangerous development, for, as shown by the fanatical actions of the Al-Ma'unah members, it imperils national security, bordering on lunacy and threatening to bring about the disintegration of Malaysia. Agreed, this development may not have been endorsed or encouraged by the Pas leadership. But does it matter? It was from within the larynx of the party's leadership that the politics of hate emanated. As observed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Al-Ma'unah is the direct result of Pas' campaign of hatred for the Government.

Pas' indulgent attitude to the Al-Ma'unah group is true to form: It exploits national events, even those that tarnish the image of Islam. Its current position on Al-Ma'unah's mystico-militancy expresses political opportunism and contributes little of substance to the larger concerns of national security and preserving the sanctity of Islam against deviations.

By doing this, Pas is engendering a climate in which acts of inhumane impropriety will come to be accepted as a new concept of religious propriety and political morality.

The hate campaign led to the incredulous welter of murmurs that the Grik incidents were orchestrated by Umno.

Let us not play down the gravity of what is unfolding today - the virulent hate campaign is designed to evoke the deepest level of irrationality and play on religious and racial insecurities. This campaign, from kindergarten classrooms to civil service corridors, betrays a profound irrationality that drives ludicrous myth-making about metaphors of evil such as Maha-Firaun (Supreme Pharaoh) and worse, promotes fanatical intolerance and pigheadedness in understanding politics and national events.

It is precisely through the construction of terrible lies that intense hatred can be mobilised to perpetrate mindless, barbaric violence. There are parallels to the anti-Jew hatred in Germany's history. Anti-Semitism in the late 1890s was given the aura of respectability by Adolf Stoecker (a preacher), August Rohling (a teacher) and intellectuals from Berlin University such as Hermann Gredtsche and Otto Breckel.

According to Dr Mahathir, the politics of hate has reached a level "where there are groups that hate the Government to the point that they do not want to listen to explanations anymore".

The process of demonisation is at work. These forces of bigotry which reject the democratic platform and abhor logic are creatures of the politics of hate. Their goal is to destroy the very foundation of rationality and liberalism that cradles our democracy and multi-racial harmony.

The politics of hate is not against Dr Mahathir, Umno or the Government

alone. It debases all Malaysians and assaults the humanity in us all.  
(END)