

27/12/2001

Better security for leaders

UNLIKE people in some countries, Malaysians do not live in the shadow of political assassinations. The idea of shooting someone because of his politics is not only repugnant, it is absolutely unacceptable in our society. It is just not part of our culture.

Malaysians, despite the diversity of race and religion, are a peaceful people and we certainly like to keep it that way.

Not surprisingly then, the report of an alleged plot to kill Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has been met largely with scepticism.

Dr Mahathir has dismissed the possibility, saying he will not change his style or his schedules. Many Malaysians are reacting with amusement.

Still, we are saddened by this cheap sensationalism by the Sun newspaper, which will scare some people and send the wrong signals to investors. Was this done deliberately?

Thanks to the politics of moderation practised by the Government and the absence of a culture of violence, the elimination of political foes remains an alien concept.

This is not to say that Government leaders and politicians should not pay heed to security concerns. They certainly should. But because of the peaceful atmosphere, there is no obsession. From the Prime Minister down, the country's leaders are pretty informal in their ways and they mingle freely with the people. Personal safety is far from their minds.

However, in view of the changing world environment this easygoing habit may have to change. There could be people who may attempt to subvert the country's peace by emulating the politics of violence in other countries.

The activities of extremist elements should be taken as an early warning. The intention of these people is to destabilise the country by creating chaos. Under such a scenario, it is conceivable that they may resort to killing key political leaders to force a change in the Government.

As a precautionary measure, it would be wise for security to be strengthened for the political leadership.

The police have rightly embarked on an investigation into the alleged assassination plot even though there may not be one. For the sake of peace, they cannot afford to take any chances.

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