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Malay-Memorandum

GATHERING FORMS COMMITTEE TO PROTECT MALAY INTERESTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 4 (Bernama) -- The Malay Solidarity Gathering which was attended by about 4,000 people today unanimously agreed to form a Task Force to draw up a memorandum to protect Malay rights.

The task force, headed by former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba, has been given up to June to prepare the memorandum titled "The Malay Interests" which would then be presented to the government for further action.

Twenty-one others who have been proposed to sit in the task force include veteran Malay politicians, academicians and professionals.

They include former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, Datuk Harun Idris, Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Tan Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, Royal Professor Ungku Aziz, Tan Sri Arshad Ayub, Tan Sri Awang Had Salleh.

The others are Tan Sri Zaki Tun Azmi, Tan Sri Dr Nordin Sopiee, Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin, Prof Datuk Dr Mahmud Zudi, Datuk Nakhaie Haji Ahmad, Tan Sri Ainuddin Wahid, Tan Sri Harun Hashim, Prof Datuk Dr Ramlah Adam, Datuk Maznah Jalil, Datuk Nordin Salleh, Khatijah Ahmad and Datuk Hassan Ahmad.

The gathering, which was originally scheduled to be held in the open at the Sultan Sulaiman Club field in Kampung Baru, was held at Merdeka Hall, Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), here on the advice of the police to avoid any untoward incidents.

Earlier, several opposition parties urged police not to issue a permit for the gathering on grounds that it could inflame racial sentiments.

PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor had described the gathering as racist.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday there were groups planning to disrupt the gathering if it was held at the Sultan Sulaiman Club and as such police did not allow the gathering to be held there.

He said he had no objection to the gathering being held but stressed that Umno had no part in its organisation.

"We don't allow Umno people to take part, but there are still Umno people participating, we can't do anything about it," he said.

Chairman of the gathering Datuk Ibrahim Ali, when presenting the resolution on the formation of the task force, said among the issues that must be highlighted included the interests of government employees, technical staff, teachers, members of the armed forces and police.

Other Malay groups are farmers, fishermen, settlers of land schemes and Malay traders.

Ibrahim also stressed the importance of focussing on education in the memorandum including scholarships for Malay students as a special privilege which should be maintained.

The gathering which went peacefully was filled with speeches by several Malay leaders and were interspersed with shouts of "Hidup Melayu!" (Long Live the Malays).

The gathering which was scheduled to start at 2 p.m. was delayed. It was conducted informally, without protocol and with everyone attending, including the leaders, sitting cross-legged on the dias and floor in the hall.

Among the leaders who addressed the crowd were Ghafar, Harun, Suhaimi (a former Umno Youth head), Deputy Information Minister Datuk Khalid Yunus

and Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Sulaiman Mohamed.

Also present were former Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie and Melaka Umno veteran Tan Sri Aziz Tapa.

Ghafar and Harun, who entered the hall at 3.15 p.m. and 3.20 p.m. respectively, were given laud applause by the crowd. Harun, who had just recovered from a stroke, had to use a wheelchair.

The last speaker, Ghafar, was seen in tears and controlling his emotion when he began his speech.

He urged the Malays to unite to continue the Malay supremacy.

Ghafar wanted the Malays not only to continue to be in power but also to continue to enjoy a good life in all fields in their own country.

"There's no point in being united if we continue to beg in our own country...we want a standard of living that can compete with the other races," he said.

Ghafar also stressed that the gathering today did not mean that the Malays wanted to wage war with the other races but merely to express their concern about the future of the race.

"We are gathered here not for the purpose of going to war. The non-Malays should not worry. We (Malays) only want to improve our situation," he said.

In his speech, Awang Had proposed that a Malay Education Trust Council be established to plan and activate Malay efforts in education.

Generally, the gathering called on the government leadership to listen to the grouses and suggestions from grassroots besides addressing the problem of the credibility of Malay leadership.

-- BERNAMA

AFY MAM ZAI MOZ AO