

25 MAR 2001

Mahathir-Tolerance

MAHATHIR, SAMY VELLU CALL FOR TOLERANCE

KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu have called on Muslims and non-Muslims to continue working together to safeguard and strengthen the unity built by Malaysia's founding fathers.

Dr Mahathir and Samy Vellu, who is also MIC president, said this in their messages in conjunction with the celebration of Ma'al Hijrah and the Telugu New Year or Ugadi tomorrow.

The two leaders also stressed the need for understanding among the various races in the country and not to be influenced by rumours created by irresponsible people who were out to create chaos in the country.

They were obviously referring to the clashes between two groups of residents in Taman Desaria and surrounding areas along Jalan Klang Lama on March 8 which resulted in the death of six people and more than 40 people injured.

In his Ma'al Hijrah message, Dr Mahathir said Muslims should not purposely make enemies of non-Muslims.

"The spreading of unfounded news that many Muslims are being destroyed and killed, with the intention of provoking their anger, is not the way to protect Muslims.

"If there are Muslims who are attacked because of fights with non-Muslims, Muslims should not react violently against other races," Dr Mahathir said.

He said such incidents should be reported to the police.

Samy Vellu drove home a similar message to the Indians, saying that if they believed in rumours, it would only destroy the country.

"Let there be continued peace in Malaysia, let there be continued prosperity in Malaysia," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said if Muslims acted irrationally, then even a small issue can be blown out of proportion and out of control.

"Many innocent people will be attacked or killed. In the end no one stands to gain anything," he added.

The Prime Minister recently said there were widespread rumours that many Muslims were killed after a minor fight.

"There was no truth at all to this rumour," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as expected, those who had no link with the original clashes were attacked, hurt and killed, most of the time far away from the original place where the incidents occurred.

He added that there were indications that these rumours and attacks were purposely done by certain groups who were out to create chaos and violence in the country.

"All this is degrading Islam. Muslims should not act outside the law.

"Such acts do not contribute to the good of the religion and to the development of Islam and an Islamic country. This is not a migration towards the right path. It is actually a return to pre-Islamic days of ignorance where one group is fanatic about their own race without taking into account the consequences of their action." Dr Mahathir said.

Samy Vellu called on the people not to be alarmed over recent incidents in Petaling Jaya but to monitor the situation through statements given by the authorities.

He reiterated that the fresh attacks reported during the last few days were the work of organised crime groups and were not racial in nature.

"The police will go after these people and rumour mongers and bring them to book. They will be punished accordingly," he said.

The minister hoped that Ugadi and Ma'al Hijrah would strengthen peace, happiness and prosperity in the country.

-- BERNAMA

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