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Suqiu-Retract

SUQIU WITHDRAWS DEMANDS TOUCHING ON MALAY RIGHTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Chinese Organisations Election Appeals Committee (Suqiu) has agreed to retract seven demands touching on the position and special rights of the Bumiputera community which it made in a petition.

The announcement was made in a joint-statement by Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and Suqiu chairman Quek Suan Hiong after a meeting between the two sides here today.

"Umno Youth and Suqiu agree that the seven points be put aside in view of the prevailing ethnic tensions, and the special rights, position and privileges of the Malays and the natives of any of the states of Sabah and Sarawak as enshrined in Article 153 and other relevant articles of the Federal Constitution not be questioned," said Hishammuddin when reading the statement at a press conference after the meeting.

Quek was present at the press conference.

Hishammuddin said the seven demands in Suqiu's petition identified as touching on the position and special privileges of the Bumiputeras are:

- * Affirmative action should be based on the protection and enhancement of the status of the weaker groups of society irrespective of religious belief, social background and race,

- * Take steps to abolish in all aspects the "Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera" distinction,

- * Distribute land fairly to needy farmers irrespective of race,

- * Abolish the quota system based on "race" and replace it with a distribution system based on "merit",

- * Abolish the racial-based quota system for university admission,

- * Accord fair treatment to all religions with regard to propagation, development and official support as well as access to official government media,

- * Introduce a system of grants and loans for all students, irrespective of ethnicity, based on merit.

With Quek at his side, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth and Suqiu were committed to discuss the the other 76 demands in Suqiu's 83-point appeals for the realisation of the points which were mutually acceptable.

He said both sides expressed regret over the unintended reaction within the Malay and Chinese communities which had arisen from the seven demands and subsequent incidents.

Both Umno Youth and Suqiu, he said, treasured the peace, harmony, cooperation and mutual respect prevailing in Malaysia's multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

"Both are jointly committed towards safeguarding and strengthening these priorities," he added.

Umno Youth was also represented at the hour-long meeting by its vice-chief Datuk Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir, assistant secretary Zulkifli Alwi and other leaders.

Representing Suqiu apart from Quek were the committee's deputy chairwoman Chew Saw Eng, Jiao Zong chief administrator Yao Li Fang and Suqiu chief administrator Wong Chin Huat.

Hishammuddin said Suqiu reiterated its stand that its 83-point appeals were made in the interest of national unity and nation-building and that it was fully committed to the creation of a united "Bangsa Malaysia".

He said both sides took into consideration the advice of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi that escalation of ethnic tension must stop.

They also took into consideration the two leaders' call on all groups that had made inflammatory statements to cease to repeat them with immediate effect.

Hishammuddin said Suqiu also reiterated that the 83-point appeals must be taken in its proper perspective and that they encompassed concerns on various matters.

He said the committee stressed that all along it did not question and challenge the special position of the Malays and other natives mentioned in the Federal Constitution.

After reading the joint-statement, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth had discharged its responsibility and was now leaving it to the national leadership to continue with the efforts.

Asked when discussion on the other 76 points in Siqui's 83-point appeals would be carried out, he said: "Give us some time to rest after working hard for three weeks."

Quek said both sides had been working on resolving the matter since Dec 24.

"This joint-statement is something good for all Malaysians," he said.

Quek also hoped that Umno Youth and Suqiu would work closely in the interests of all Malaysians.

-- BERNAMA

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