

Barisan leaders share Dr M's concerns

STAR 28 JUL 2002

KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional leaders share Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's concerns over the rise of extremism and segregation, particularly among the younger generation in the country.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said component parties should also do their part, as Umno was fighting a battle against religious and racial extremism among the Malays.

"We, Chinese-based parties, need to fight against extremism on the side of the Chinese community. We have to find a way to complement each other and have a greater understanding amongst component parties in the Barisan," he added.

PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas said component parties should address the matter and if no action were taken within Barisan, it would lead to a disaster.

MCA leaders also shared Dr Mahathir's concerns on the rise of extremism and segregation among youths.

MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek said: "When I was younger and still schooling, we were the examples (of racial integration)."

"From primary to secondary school if we interacted with other races, we would grow up with values of togetherness and we can work together," he added.

MCA vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng said it was a problem that the nation was facing and if no action were

taken to unite our people, especially the young, race relations would pose a great problem in future.

"We agree there is a trend of extremism in Malaysia and this is very dangerous. We agree with the Prime Minister. After leading the country for 21 years and having been to all parts of the world, he knows that if there is no political stability and no unity among the young it will cause problems in the future," he said.

Another vice-president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said parties in the coalition must remain strong in order to be effective in carrying policies that are good for a multi racial society.

"If the extremist were to be strong, it would upset the stability and harmony of the country. This is a strong message to all the Barisan parties."

"We should stay moderate and always be sensitive to racial issues and should try to resolve problems within the Barisan mechanism," he added.

MCA Wanita chief Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen said: "To the families, I appeal to them to make it a point to invite other children to come and play and interact (with their children). I also ask the parent and teacher associations to have activities among the races.

"We share the Prime Minister's concern about polarisation. We are not getting closer but further apart."

"The Government cannot do very much. It must start in their own backyard," she said.

Dr M: Mix with each other to achieve good ties

From Page One
AR 28 JUL 2002

Wisma MCA.
"As such, try to minimise this racial divide among our young as they will be the ones who will inherit this beloved country," he added.

He said the racial segregation was dangerous and could result in the future generation not being able to respect the sensitivities of others.

He said racial understanding and good relations could only be achieved if all races in Malaysia practised moderation and were willing to mix, work, play and socialise with each other.

"If we don't mix, we won't understand the cultures of other races and we won't be sensitive to their taboos and sensitivities," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said extremism was becoming popular in politics.

Giving an example, he said PAS, which did not want to work with other communities, was getting more support now than previously.

The Prime Minister said his generation mixed freely with one another as well as lived, played and worked together.

He said his neighbours were Chinese and Indians, adding: "I had no problems".

Citing his campus days, Dr Mahathir said he shared a room with a Chinese student.

"I did not become less Malay or less Muslim. nor did he become less Chinese just because we stayed in the same room," he added.

The situation now was different, he lamented, as students of different races were unwilling to stay in the same room and also to interact in lecture halls.

Later on, he said, when they started work, they could not adapt to bosses and co-workers of a different race.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was trying to curb extremism and one of the ways was introducing the concept of Vision Schools, where national, Chinese and Tamil schools are housed in the same compound.

The idea, however, did not go down well with the Chinese community although it was already implemented in some places, he said.

"If they do not want (to go to) the same school, at least get the schools closer to each other. Then you can play games together, attend the assembly together but you go back to your respective schools, there is no change in the school," he added.

He regretted that there were some people who objected to even bringing schools close to each other.

Dr Mahathir said when he went to an MCA meeting, he got the same kind of support as when he went to Umno meetings. They even shouted "Hidup Mahathir".

"Imagine that. When I was appointed Prime Minister, everybody said, 'My God what is going to happen?'"

"But now they say, 'My God, he is going to step down'".

"So, things have changed now."