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MB: Be wary of religious fanatics out to create trouble

MUAR, Sun. - Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman has called on the people to be wary of religious fanatics and racial extremists bent on creating disharmony among the various communities.

These fanatics, he said, exploited Islam to influence and disunite the Malays while the extremists harped on racial sentiments to destroy 45 years of hard work and continuous efforts by national leaders to develop the country.

"We have moulded this country into a peaceful and prosperous place for all races. It is our joint responsibility to defend and uphold our sovereignty for future generations.

"We will not allow a few fanatics, opportunists and extremists to destroy our homes by creating unrest in the country," he said after launching the Merdeka Month celebration at Kesang Recreational Resort near the Johor-Malacca border today.

Ghani said these fanatics used Islam and racial differences as weapons to split the races.

He said they would make up lies and scandals to incite the people to show disrespect to national leaders.

Ghani cited the scramble to lead the congregation during Friday prayers at a mosque in Kuala Terengganu, which was witnessed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In Penang, the Penang Islamic Council will replace any mosque qariah committees found using their own Friday sermons for Government-bashing.

Its president, Datuk Dr Hilmi Yahaya, said action would be taken against such committees which did not use Friday sermons provided by the council.

Dr Hilmi, who is Deputy Chief Minister, said however the council had so far not taken action against any such offenders, although it had detected several incidents where qariah committees used their own sermons.

He was speaking after launching the National Family Day celebrations 2002 at State-level in Teluk Bahang today.