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Strategies to solve south Thailand problem

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SOLVING the economic, social and cultural problems of Thai Muslims in south Thailand requires pro-active, comprehensive strategies over the short, medium and long terms.

Such strategies can only be effective if there is commitment, goodwill, co-operation and good relations between the Thai Government and Thai Muslims.

All this needs to be put in place as soon as possible as genuine peace and stability in south Thailand is important for Thailand and its relations with its Muslimmajority neighbouring countries.

All people, including Thai Muslims, must reject violence, death and destruction as ways to address the problems in south Thailand. Such ways would not solve the problems but would only make conditions worse for everyone.

Thai Muslims should follow the wise advice from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he said at the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit in Kuala Lumpur that Muslims should pause and use their heads and strategise to successfully attain their aims, and not resort to emotion and violence even if they are in difficult conditions.

The Thai plan to construct a border fence, and simultaneously raise RM68 million for developing the south region, appears to be part of a stick-and-carrot strategy for the short term to address the problem. This action appears likely to reduce the irrational violence in the short term, and as such should be welcomed by moderate, peace-loving people who also hope for broader and longer-term steps.

The fence has also the added benefit of reducing smuggling and illegal entries along the border.

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