

Religious issues not resolved by three PMs

Malaysiakini.com

May 13, 2011

Prime Minister Najib Razak's very responsible action in meeting both Muslim and Christian leaders separately has defused the unnecessary tension caused by the irresponsible journalism of a major national daily.

Failure to nip the problem in the bud by the authorities caused much uneasiness amongst the different communities.

Our young home minister (Hishammuddin Hussein) could have eased so much tension if he had made a statement calling for calm. He and a leading police officer instead cautioned those who were alleged to have brought the so-called 'Christianity as official religion' issue. This was done before conducting a thorough investigation.

Further, a surprise accusation by a veteran government leader Rais Yatim did not help.

Of late, the image of the Home Ministry and the Royal Malaysian Police leaves much to be desired. One gets the impression that they see in just one opposition leader a bogeyman, not realising that they are making him a hero to the new generation of young educated Malaysians.

As the tension increased with NGOs and other leaders 'lashing' at each other, the nation waited for the PM's timely involvement. The PM's assurance to look into outstanding religious issues is soothing.

But, although I welcome the assurance of the PM, it must be understood that most of the religious issues facing us today have not been resolved over a period where three PMs have been at our nation's helm. I sincerely hope that all parties show much greater understanding to reach a mutual agreement.

In my more than 50 years of religious and inter-faith activities I have not come across any non-Muslim NGO intending to change or replace the status of Islam in Malaysia. The Federal Constitution amply protects the rights of Islam and all other religions.

The writer is former president of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST).