

Malay NGO: Fridays shouldn't be used for illegal rallies
Malaysiakini.com
November 9 ,2011
by Susan Loone

A Malay NGO based in Penang is totally peeved that 'unruly' streets demonstrations are taking place after Friday prayers, describing it as a holy day for Muslims.

The Penang Malay Congress said it was disappointed that the "organisers or funders" of these rallies, who are Muslim Malays, seem to prefer choosing Fridays as the day for their physical activities.

Its president, Rahmad Isahak, said that he is surprised that active Muslim rights groups like Perkasa have not spoken up against these rallies on Fridays, especially after compulsory prayers in mosques.

"Are they not aware or do they purposely choose Friday, which is a holy day for Muslims, to carry out their illegal activities?" asked Rahmad during a press conference today.

"They should realise that placing the dignity of the Malays on the streets with the intention to express their dissatisfaction towards the state government is an act that is uncivilised and looked down upon by the non-Malays," he charged.

Rahmad said the state government may not entertain the protesters if they conveyed the problems of the Malays in a such a physical and unruly manner.

He added that as a Malay, he too, would not have given such protesters the time of day if they had approached him in such a rude manner.

'Mat rempits' were paid

Rahmad, who claimed he was speaking for the 640,000 Malays in Penang who disliked street demonstrations, was referring to weekly protests held by several NGOs around Komtar.

The protests, staged mostly after weekly Friday prayers, were usually led by Suara Anak-Anak Malaysia chief Mohamad Ghani Abdul Jiman against Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

Suara Anak-anak Malaysia president Mohamad Ghani Abdul Jiman burning bar council logo Last Friday, Mohamad Ghani, together with other Muslim NGOs, held a protest outside the Kampung Jawa mosque against Seksualiti Merdeka, where the group stomped on and burnt an effigy of the Bar Council logo.

They targetted the Bar Council as its former president and Bersih 2.0 chief S Ambiga had planned to launched the yearly but aborted festival last week.

Mohamad Ghani, who is Komtar Traders Association vice-chief, has led many protests since last year to condemn Lim as a "racist" leader out to marginalise the Muslim Malay community in Penang.

Meanwhile, Rahmad was also unhappy with the 200 motorbikers (mat rempit) who held a noisy protest outside the state legislative assembly on Monday, Oct 31, to demand a racing track to carry out their activities.

He alleged that the youths who participated in the rally may have been paid by certain quarters, while most of them were unaware of what they were doing.

Organisers of the group, an NGO called Pertubuhan Islam Gabungan Amal, had however, denied it was behind the bikers, who wore yellow T-shirts saying Lim was racist.

'Rallies are useless'

Rahmad pointed out the futility of the rallies, saying it has so far failed to benefit the Malay community.

Members of the Penang Malay Congress had met Lim recently and submitted a five-point memorandum on Malay issues without organising any rallies, he added.

"Where is the Malay culture which prefers discussion? The streets demonstrations appear to be more towards politicking by those who are bankrupt of power," he said.

"They are culprits from Umno or Pakatan Rakyat leaders who are behind these groups and are willing to make use of the youths to achieve their goals," he alleged.

Rahmad reminded those responsible for denigrating the image of the Malays to take note of Article 153 of the constitution which touches on Malay rights and the powers of the Agong to ensure those rights are protected.

He added that destroying the image of the Malays with such physical demonstrations is akin to insulting the role and powers of the Agong.

He also did not spare the Pakatan Rakyat government, urging them not to take the rallies lightly.

"The DAP-led Pakatan government should seriously look into the plight of the Malay community in Penang or such displays of dissatisfaction would continue," he warned.

"The Penang government should speedily set up a Consultative Council on the Social Economic situation of the Malays so that the community's grouses can be channelled through this forum," he urged.

He also took the police to task for not acting professionally to prevent such street demonstrations from recurring.

"These groups have the spirit to conduct the demonstrations weekly because the police do not act accordingly when they know about these activities earlier," he said.

"Please act properly or else the Penang Malays are going to lose confidence in the police force," he said.

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