

1Malaysia comic runs down 'charcoal' people

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"Keep yourself away from Mr Charcoal," says a cartoon character running away from a group of dark-skinned people in a strip of a comic book distributed during an event recently.

The '1Malaysia - Majalah Untuk Rakyat', bearing the 1Malaysia logo, was discovered by The Malay Mail to have been distributed at the 1Malaysia People's Taxi (TR1Ma) programme in Bukit Jalil on June 25, which broke the Malaysia Book of Records by hosting the largest gathering of 10,000 taxis.

It has a segment, titled 1Malaysia vs 1Pati, in which the strip begins with a boy appreciating the country's multiracial society, but runs away from a group of dark-skinned people.

"Haaa ... this is not 1Malaysia but 1Pati who wants to destroy the country. Keep yourself away from Mr Charcoal," the cartoon character says in the caption.

The Home Ministry's publication control and Quran text division secretary, Abd Aziz Md Nor, told on Wednesday that they were unaware of the publication.

"We have not heard of such a publication and would like to know why they are being distributed during a government event. We are not aware of the magazine because no reports have been lodged."

He said the ministry would investigate the publication for any "undesirable" content.

"We will call up the publishers and ask for their explanation. We will ban the publication, if necessary."

The Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD), the event's organiser, was also unaware the comics were being distributed.

"I can certainly say we were not responsible for the magazine's distribution," said a Spad spokesman.

Rights groups livid

Non-government organisations and human rights groups have criticised the publication and questioned how it was allowed to be distributed at a public function.

Human rights movement Pusat Komunikasi Masyarakat (Komas) executive director Johann Tan said the government must apologise for insulting the international community and embarrassing the country.

"I feel ashamed that it came from our country. I understand the fear that some Malaysians have but it is not the colour of the skin but who the person is," he said.

"Delinquents exist in all races. It is shameful that the publication was distributed during a government event because it does not represent all of our views."

Suaram executive director Nalini Elumalai said allowing such a publication to be distributed would only create racial tension.

"While Malaysians are coming out and resisting racism by calling for solidarity, there are some who are ignorant and can easily be influenced by the racist message," she said.

"It is dangerous to allow the distribution of this kind of publication, especially when it is accessible to schoolchildren."

The comic book's publisher, Blue Pipe Studio Enterprise, could not be reached for comments.

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