

Bersih rallies cause damage, so stay away, imams told

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today labelled the Bersih gatherings as causing damage and he called on imams and mosque committee members not to get involved in such activities.

Addressing a gathering of imams and mosque committee members nationwide in Serdang, Najib said they should be 'muslihun' - people who embark in good deeds or engage in a major renewal.

He said they should not be 'mufsidun' - people who cause destruction by affecting the unity of the races and also tarnish country's image.

"We are 'muslihun' and not 'mufsidun' in context of making unity based on inter-racial harmony.

"Compare with the 'mufsidun', who are clearly destroying and dividing the unity between races and between Muslims, such as the Bersih 3.0 rally that caused more harm than good," he said.

In using the Bersih protests in Mecca and Medina as an example, Najib said these had tarnished Malaysia's image and may cause the country's haj quota to be withdrawn.

The government allows gatherings with opposing views, but they had to follow the laws of the country, he told an inaugural gathering of more than 10,000 imams and mosque committee members in Serdang, Selangor, this morning.

'We cannot take protests in Saudi Arabia lightly'

Several pilgrims who were performing the umrah had held protests in Mecca and Medina on April 28 in support of the call for clean and fair elections mooted by the Bersih steering committee.

"This is something we cannot take lightly as the Saudi Arabian government has banned pilgrims from a particular country from performing the haj.

"This is something that cannot be joked about. I know of pilgrims from some countries who arrived in Jeddah but were not allowed to perform the haj and were turned away," he said.

"I want to tell the imams that the government has spoken through the proper channels."

The prime minister said he had spoken to King Abdullah Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, with whom he has close ties, and informed him about the actual situation (about Bersih).

"We are concerned that our pilgrims may not be able to perform their haj this year.

"I have spoken to King Abdullah and managed to convince him and the Saudi authorities not to review our haj quota," Najib added.

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