

## **PM: Was Ngeh's apology sincere?**

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**By Aidila Razak**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today questioned the sincerity of the apology by DAP's Beruas MP Ngeh Koo Ham whose Twitter posting on an anti-Islam film caused a stir.

Speaking to reporters today, the prime minister said that one cannot say something hurtful and then apologise after receiving flak for it.

"It's too easy, it means that we, too, can malign other religions and then apologise.

"The question is whether he is sincere or not," he said.

Saying this after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting, he said Ngeh's remarks showed that DAP "belittles Muslims and is not aware of issues relating to Muslims".

"We strongly condemn his statement which questions Muslim reactions to the film," he said.

Ngeh on Twitter had pondered if Muslims were putting too much energy into protesting the films.

Initially defending his tweet, he has since apologised.

Meanwhile, Najib said Umno strongly condemns the anti-Islam film Innocence of Muslims and the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published by a French magazine.

"The supreme council finds this unacceptable, even if seen through the perspective of freedom of expression which is the Western world's strongest excuse for smearing the sanctity of Islam and the dignity," he said.

He also advised Muslims, in protesting the film and cartoons, to do so in a civil manner.

"Violent protests should not happen as Islam does not condone the loss of lives and harm to bodies, properties and goods. Two wrong don't make a right," he said.

"We encourage dialogue and cooperation within society to inculcate tolerance and understanding, as pushed by the global movement of moderates."

Trying to change flag a 'deplorable' act

On a separate matter, he said any attempts to "change" the national flag was a deplorable (terkutuk) act.

"We leave it to the authorities to investigate and take action but most importantly, the rakyat must condemn this act which maligns the nation," he said.

"This cannot be accepted by the rakyat who overwhelmingly love the country and will defend its honour."

He said that the flag "is not a plaything" as it symbolises the nation's "sanctity, sovereignty and dignity".

Two youths flew a flag dubbed the Sang Saka Malaya on the eve of National Day, in a homage to the leftist movement for independence involving, among others, Kesatuan Melayu Muda.

Critics have, however, claimed that it was an attempt to change the flag.

Also at the press conference was Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein who said that the police have sent the investigation papers on the case to the Attorney-General's Chambers and it is up to the latter whether to decide if charges will be made.

"There have been previous cases to do with the flag where people have been charged," he said.