

PAS leader, Buddhist group join hands to douse tension

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A PAS leader and a local Buddhist movement have come together to form an interfaith dialogue for peace between their two faiths.

Parit Buntar MP Mujahid Yusof Rawa and Sherab Wong, a Buddhist Vajralink Movement leader, said "healthy, positive and proactive" dialogues must continue between individuals and associations.

"Each religion must be proactive in ensuring their members understand the meaning of respect for each other and totally avoid extremist views which are of no benefit to a multiracial society," said the duo in a joint statement issued last night.

Mujahid is also chairperson for Southeast Asia Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace, which has links in Indonesia and Thailand.

Interfaith relations have become challenging, said the duo, especially when the question of sensitivities are not addressed as this would undermine the relationship between different faiths.

The latest incident at a resort in Sedili, Kota Tinggi where the manager allowed a group of Singaporean Buddhists to hold their services in a surau is a case in point, they said.

The incident created so much furore that the resort manager was remanded by police to assist them in their probe over the issue and there are calls for the surau to be demolished.

"This happened when there is no sensitivity among certain quarters which would result in heightened tension between the different religions," they said.

"It seems that the element of respect no longer underlines our relationships while the multiracial fabric of our society continues to be threatened," they added.

"What is worrying is that certain quarters are taking advantage of the matter to further incite this fragile situation by causing hatred between religions," they stressed.

Return to the federal constitution

The two leaders urged everyone to return to the federal constitution which states that Islam is the official religion of the realm and that there is freedom of religions for other faiths.

They urged the relevant authorities to use existing laws to act on those who purposely create hatred among citizens.

The duo have also ticked off the police, questioning their affiliation and impartiality.

They said the police needed to be firm in acting against those who are responsible for disturbing religious sensitivities but a thorough probe needs to be done before action is taken.

"The police should be independent of any political influence, and work hard to eliminate the rising crime in our midst," they added.

They also urged all sectors to refrain from taking advantage over the incidents by further inflaming the situation instead of seeking for a solution.

"May no one create situations that purposely give rise to sensitivities with the intention of fulfilling narrow racial objectives and encourage racial hatred," they said.

"The past incidents were not really serious problems between two religions but made to appear as such by those who harbour ill motives for their own personal interest.

"We hope everyone can view the current issues with a matured, open mind and heart so that our thinking and actions are not influenced or tarnished by irresponsible parties," they added.