

PKR: Intolerance will foil Visit Malaysia Year 2014

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Sarawak PKR has warned that religious intolerance and protests against other religions may undermine the 'Visit Malaysia 2014' programmes as foreign tourists may be afraid to visit the country, its chief Baru Bian said.

"Malaysia is now known as one of the countries in the world that are not tolerating religious freedom, and if this is globally or internationally known, then such intolerance and protests definitely will affect the 'Visit Malaysia 2014' programmes," he said.

Bian was asked to comment on some Umno branches and Muslim groups last week threatening protests against churches that use 'Allah' in their Sunday services.

The protests called after father Lawrence Andrew said that churches in Selangor would continue to use the word 'Allah' in their sermons even though the court of appeal had ruled against its use by Catholic weekly the Herald.

Criticising the organisers of the protests, Bian said, "When religious freedom is not tolerated, there will not only be potential implications, but very explosive too as evidenced by countries which do not tolerate religious freedom.

"Look at those countries that do not tolerate religious freedom and what is happening to those countries.

"If Malaysia continues with its religious intolerance, then Malaysia will be like those countries where tourists will not come as they fear for their safety.

"As far as tourism is concerned, Malaysia stands to lose," warned Bian, who is the Ba'Kelalan assemblyperson.

'Muhyiddin hypocritical, Najib mute'

The Visit Malaysia 2014 campaign launched by Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Saturday is expected to rake in some RM76 billion of foreign exchange.

"This represents a significant increase of RM11 billion in foreign exchange earnings," Muhyiddin said.

He said in 2012, the total tourism income generated in the economy was recorded at RM103.3 billion in 2012, representing a growth of 7.2 per cent, comprising RM62.5 billion and RM40.8 billion in international and local tourism receipts respectively.

The deputy prime minister also gave his assurance that Malaysia is a safe tourist destination and this could be seen in the many ethnic groups living in harmony with a common bond of kinship and solidarity.

Muhyiddin said, Visit Malaysia 2014 will serve as a tool to extend the bridge of friendship and promote better understanding of various cultures and heritage.

Bian said that what is most regrettable is that while the deputy prime minister talked of 'extending the bridge of friendship and promote better understanding', he was on the other hand encouraging and supporting Umno and Malay religious organisations to organise the protests.

"The worst part of it that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had not made any comment on the raid and seizure of the Malay and Iban versions of the Bibles from the Bible Society of Malaysia.

"As Prime Minister of the nation, it is very disappointing. That he has not said even a word on the issue until today.

"It shows that he is a weak leader. We understand his position as the issue is very sensitive, and he may be pushed or may lose some of the Malay Muslim votes.

"Be that as it may, Najib is prime minister of every race and he must stand on what is legally right. He cannot simply keep quiet because of religious sentiment that he refuses to make a statement.

"This is the failure of the Prime Minister, a very disappointing indeed," he said.

"By his silence, he is in fact confirming and endorsing everything. He is trying to please his own people, and we are worried that Selangor Islamic Authority (Jais) and Umno, which have acted like pirates can even, enter your house as long as the bible is there.

"If they can do that to the Bible Society of Malaysia, surely they will do it your house," Bian warned.

Masing: Act on Jais

Meanwhile, President of Parti Rakyat Sarawak James Masing questioned why no action was taken against Jais for the illegal raid.

"If indeed the raid and confiscation of the Christian bibles is unconstitutional since Jais has no authority over non-Muslim premises and illegal since they had no search warrant, why no action was taken against the officials who raided the place?"

"But instead the persons who had the right to defend their possession were questioned by the police," said Masing, who is Land Development Minister.

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