

Umno man fries Dr M's Bible burning defence

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's justification of Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali's call to burn the Malay-language Bible is invalid, as the latter's call was meant in protest said a Sabah Umno leader.

Sabah Umno deputy chief Salleh Said Keruak slammed Mahathir's comparison of Muslims burning old copies of the Quran so that it would not be thrown out like garbage.

"Burning Qurans, in this case, is an act of respect.

"(However) burning the Quran as a mark of protest is not a mark of respect, especially if done by non-Muslims to protest against Islam.

"In this instance, we are talking about Muslims burning the Bible to protest Christians using Allah in the Bible.

"This is not meant as a mark of respect, like Muslims burning old and tattered Qurans," Salleh wrote in his blog yesterday.

Mahathir argued in his blog that Ibrahim's remark was not seditious and also pointed out that it is acceptable for Muslims to burn copies of the Quran if the book is old and is done without ill intention.

"For the Muslims, if they have something or some document which they are averse to, they should not throw it around, they should not throw it on the ground and step on it.

"They should show respect for the Bible and by burning it the way they burn the Al-Quran, that is permitted," Mahathir said.

Salleh (left), who is Sabah state assembly speaker and former chief minister, said Mahathir's statement has not gone down well with Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak and the issue should be put to rest.

"Tun Dr Mahathir should speak out with a voice of liberalism and not with a voice of extremism.

"Telling Malaysians that it is right for Ibrahim Ali to call for the burning of the Bible is not something Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak will endorse.

"Even if the Christians do not protest such statements, Muslims will still feel uncomfortable with something like that," Salleh said.

'Classic example of illogical thinking'

Meanwhile, DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang said Mahathir's argument is a "classic" example of his illogical thinking.

"This is not being a dotard but Mahathir's classic perverse illogic believing the end justifies the means – whether lies, sedition or even treason," he said in a statement today.

However, Lim (right) pointed out that news reports of Ibrahim's statement on Jan 19 last year raised questions whether it was done with good intentions.

"Muslims must unite to protect their religion. They must seize those Bibles, including the Malay editions, which contained the term Allah and other Arabic religious terms, and burn them.

"This is the way to show our anger against disrespect to our sensitivity," Free Malaysia Today quoted Ibrahim as saying, referring to a claim that copies of the Bible had been distributed to Muslim pupils at the entrance to a secondary school.

In addition, Lim also accused Mahathir of failing to tell the difference between advocating Muslims to burn copies of the Bible that are no longer be used, and advocating the burning of sacred books of other religions.

Mahathir's statement is "unbecoming" of an elder statement, he said, because Mahathir was abetting irresponsible and incendiary actions such as those from Ibrahim.

"Does Mahathir want Malaysia to be plunged into chaos or go up in flames, with Muslims freely calling for the burning of the Bible or holy books of other religions, whether Tripitaka for Buddhism, Vedas for Hinduism or Guru Granth Sahib for Sikhism or for non-Muslims to call for the burning of the Quran?" he asked.

Ibrahim's statement made headlines again recently, after Bagan MP Lim Guan Eng asked the government in Parliament on why Ibrahim hasn't been charged in court for his statement.

The written reply came on Oct 7, saying that Ibrahim was not charged because he was referring to the Bible containing the word 'Allah', and because his statement was not meant to incite religious conflict but to "defend the sanctity of Islam".