

Will PM's 'zero-tolerance' apply on Utusan?

Malaysiakini.com

August 27, 2010

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak should take action against Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia if he is serious over his pledge of "zero-tolerance" against racism.

DAP advisor Lim Kit Siang said that the newspaper had been trying to incite racial tensions and hatred with "baseless and irresponsible headlines".

Among headlines in question are "Benar, 'perang besar' boleh berlaku di Malaysia" (It's true, a 'great war' can happen in Malaysia), "Nama Guan Eng ganti Agong" (Guan Eng's name has replaced the King's) and "Ahli Parlimen DAP 'tazkirah' di surau" (DAP MP gives 'religious advice' in surau).

"Were these Utusan front-page headlines to promote 1Malaysia and foster inter-racial and inter-religious understanding, accord and harmony or the reverse?" asked Kit Siang in a statement today.

In the case of Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, Kit Siang claims that Utusan had "sought to stoke religious sentiments four consecutive days in a row.

In the case of the Utusan's front-page report today on Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching's presence in a surau, Kit Siang said the daily appears to be attempting to cause ethnic disharmony.

Goodwill distorted by daily?

According to the daily, Teo had violated the Selangor Sultan's decision to bar non-Muslims from surau and mosques as well as committees, to commit a grave insult towards Muslims.

NONEThe daily quotes NGOs explaining that non-Muslims were akin to 'unclean' women having their periods and it was wrong for her to approach the front portion of the prayer room which is reserved for the imam.

Kit Siang argued that Teoh was present at the Al-Huda Surau, Kajang which falls under her constituency, to give out donations and speak on invitation of the surau authorities.

"There is divided opinion in the Muslim community on the propriety of the event, but Teo had acted out of the fullest respect for Islam and her Muslim constituents and not to insult Islam," said Kit Siang.

"The question that must be asked is whether Utusan's front-page coverage is to foster inter-religious harmony and goodwill or because of a larger agenda to do the opposite.

"Najib should therefore walk the talk of a zero-tolerance policy for racism and religious incitement starting with Utusan with zero-tolerance for delay in taking action," he added.

Why delay over 'racist' HMs?

In the same vein, Kit Siang also questioned why the cabinet has yet to arrive at a decision over complaints against two school principals - in Johor and Kedah - who uttered derogatory remarks against students from minority groups.

"How long more is needed by Najib and (MCA president) Dr Chua (Soi Lek) to establish whether the school principals... had made derogatory, offensive and insensitive remarks... rendering them completely unfit to continue as school principals?" asked Kit Siang.

Kit Siang mockingly told his MCA rival that it was unbelievable that the "outspoken" Chua had denied that the government was slow in taking action against the principals.

In an attempt to sooth simmering discontent over the actions of the principals, while taking questions from the audience at a function in Kuala Lumpur, Najib said that the federal government will take stern action against racism.

However, he stopped short of stating that civil servants who commit acts of racism would be subject to dismissal.

"We need to have an educational process. It is still quite nascent (for the civil servants). But rest assured, those who make racist remarks, action will be taken," said Najib.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/141320>