

Prayers turn into debate on 'cow-head' debacle

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A special Hindu prayer session, that had a calf in it, turned into a lively debate between rival political groups over the Shah Alam 'cow-head' protest last week.

Organised by former Internal Security Act detainee K Vasanthakumar, the event was initially meant as a protest against Umno for its alleged role in the incident.

Some 200 people attended the komatha pooja prayers, where tributes were offered to a calf to seek blessings, were performed at Padang Jawa Sri Maha Marriamman temple in Shah Alam.

Shortly after the prayers concluded, several pro-Pakatan Rakyat individuals took to the stage to condemn Umno, which they blamed for the 'cow head' demo.

A team of MIC Youth leaders, who were also present and led by its head T Mohan, however rebutted the claims saying that the protestors were a small isolated group that was not endorsed by Umno.

"(Umno Youth chief) Khairy Jamaluddin's statement, that desecrating the cow head is as bad as desecrating the quran, proves that Umno is not involved," Mohan told reporters later.

He hoped that the government would take action soon in order to prevent similar protests from happening and to avoid being perceived as practicing double standards.

"There should not be a precedent where, for example, people start to protest against the building of a surau in an Indian-majority area. We should not create this kind of environment," he said.

The MIC delegation was invited by Vasanthakumar. Also in attendance were members of Pakatan coalition parties and NGOs.

Hisham backed protestors

Another former ISA detainee V Ganabatirau disagreed with the MIC youth stand. He said Home Minister and Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein's initial defence of the protestors showed Umno had given tacit support.

"After that, he had a dialogue with those extremist. How could he? If he said that no temple can be built in a Malay-majority area, then where are we to go?" said Ganabatirau.

Similarly, Vasanthakumar told the crowd that Umno appeared to be backing the group, with the purpose of using race to regain support.

"You can see in Permatang Pasir that Umno is losing Malay support... Each time this happens, Umno will end up using racial methods. We advise them to stop and think of fostering racial harmony instead.

"They must remember that at the (upcoming) Bagan Pinang by-election, 22 percent or

2,800 voters are Indians. They will be closely watching how Umno handles this matter," said Vasanthakumar.

Both Vasanthakumar and Ganabatirau were incarcerated under the ISA in December 2007 for their involvement in Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf).

After a falling out with top two Hindraf leaders P Uthayakumar and P Waytha Moorthy, Vasanthakumar and Ganabatirau are venturing out on their own to champion the Indian community's cause.

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