

1 Rule sought for 1 Malaysia
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An umbrella body representing religions other than Islam has condemned the cow-head protest that took place two weeks ago in Shah Alam, saying such conduct "should not be condoned or allowed to be repeated with impunity".

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism also described the protest - against the relocation of a Hindu temple to Section 23 - as "irreverent and sacrilegious".

In a statement issued today, council president Dr Thomas Phillips said the situation had worsened when protest organisers took their place next to Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein (*seated right*) at a press conference, after their meeting with him.

"(The minister) seemed to have bestowed honour to the perpetrators of a gravely offensive and dangerous event (where) seditious speeches (were made), accompanied by (people) stepping on the cow's head. What signals would this send to the people?" asked Phillips.

"There must be one rule for all Malaysians. All who incite ill feelings amongst religious communities, denigrate any religion, desecrate the religious symbols of any religion or threaten to commit violence against others must be promptly deterred and held accountable. They must face charges and given a fair trial in a court of law."

On Aug 28, about 50 residents of Section 23 had marched to the Selangor state secretariat to protest the proposed relocation of the Sri Maha Mariamman Hindu temple from nearby Section 19.

Following a police probe, attorney-general Abdul Gani Patail yesterday said the protesters would face charges of sedition and/or illegal assembly.

'Social dynamics affected'

Phillips also expressed deep concern about the objections raised by the residents and the way the state government has accepted these.

"(The site initially identified) was 300m away from (the houses), six times more than the 50m requirement," he said.

"If the authorities accept the objections by certain quarters, the social dynamics of Malaysian life will be affected and the consequence on national integration will be very serious indeed."

Phillips further said the people must not subscribe to thinking about Malaysians as "majorities and minorities, and majorities versus minorities".

"For the sake and good of all Malaysians and (for) peace and order in Malaysia, consistent, fair, just and rational measures should be applied regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, gender or political connection," he said.

Yesterday, Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim announced a "more suitable site for

the temple. Although still within Section 23, it is some 400m from the nearest houses.

The decision was made following furious objections by some residents who had demanded that the temple be relocated in an area with a predominantly non-Malay profile.

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