

Dr M: Ball's in Thai court

It's up to them to decide on roadmap

LANGKAWI: It is up to the Thai authorities to proceed with the Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad-initiated roadmap to peace in southern Thailand.

"I have done my part. My mission is now complete. It is now up to the Thai authorities to proceed with follow-up action," Dr Mahathir said, adding that he was willing to render further help if required.

Within 10 months of seeking an audience with Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Dr Mahathir had completed his mission to establish good cordial working relationship between the Thai authorities and the leaders of Thai Malay Muslim organisations.

The Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO), together with Honorary Royal Thai Consul Datuk Shazryl Eskay Abdullah, prepared a draft of the Joint Peace and Development Plan for South Thailand and a copy was delivered to then Thai Deputy Prime

Minister Chitchai Vanasatidya in August.

Dr Mahathir, who is PGPO chairman, was responding to an allegation in an English daily in Thailand recently that the peace initiative taken by him was heading nowhere.

He said the idea to initiate the peace talk was mooted after a discussion with former Thai prime minister Anand Panyarachun, who was given the task to study the southern crisis.

"I sought an audience with the King in October following Anand's advice. The King agreed with Anand's suggestion that I be involved in the peace initiative for southern Thailand," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Thai National Intelligence Agency director Lt-Gen Vaipot Srinual was the best person to mediate the peace process further because he understood very well the causes of disputes that had led to the conflict.

"Vaipot and the Thai Muslim leaders can get together and

seek the help of the Malaysian authorities to mediate the peace process," he added.

"But we must remember that signing a peace treaty will not end the violence in the south because the volatile situation is fuelled by various factors, including criminal activities."

Dr Mahathir was surprised that none of the Thai Malay Muslim leaders are calling for independence or autonomy.

"They merely want peace, better education policy, equitable development, and better economic prospects for the South," he said, adding that the requests made by the community leaders were very basic and should be easily fulfilled.

PGPO executive director Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said the Thai Malay Muslims also hoped that the authorities would declare a blanket amnesty "so that people could start their lives anew".

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