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PRIME NEWS

MCA urges PM to end rallies to preserve harmony

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KUALA LUMPUR: MCA has urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to put a stop to rallies, calling them a potential threat to national harmony.

Party president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said mass rallies could lead to violent confrontations sparked by extremists who wanted to create disorder.

"MCA is urging our prime minister to put a stop to rallies. Clearly, they are threatening to tear the fabric of our nation apart," Liow said after chairing the party's central committee meeting here yesterday.

Liow, who is also transport minister, said the two rallies held recently had placed a strain on national unity and painted a negative image of the country.

He was referring to the Bersih 4 rally held on Merdeka eve last month and the reactionary Red-Shirt rally on Sept 16.

"Bersih 4 saw undesirable elements, such as stomping on the pictures of leaders. This goes against the values of Malaysians.

"In the same breath, MCA disagrees with statements that the Red-Shirt rally was peaceful and the participants had abided by the law.

"It is obvious that the rally-goers' intended to stoke fear and create racial tension," Liow said.

Liow, the leader of the largest Chinese-based party in Barisan Nasional, said there were clear incidents of violence during the Sept 16 rally, which saw rally-goers challenging law enforcement authorities and uttering seditious statements.

"Their words and actions are meant to intimidate and are tantamount to criminal threats against the vendors of Petaling Street in general, and the Chinese community in particular.

"Words such as 'Cina Babi' and 'Hapuskan SJKC' cannot be excused," he said.

Liow said singling out the Chinese and showing animosity to the ethnic group were unacceptable and could not be condoned.

"BN must take stock and put a stop to this problem immediately," he said.

After chairing the divisional leaders special briefing session, Liow said the party leadership had briefed the grassroots leaders on the country's developments, including the Bersih 4 and Himpunan Rakyat Bersatu rallies.

He said the four-hour briefing had members unanimously agreeing that they wanted the authorities to halt rallies.

"They urged the government to take action on seditious remarks made by any party, especially on those wanting Chinese schools in the country to be closed."

On a statement by Pasir Gudang MCA Youth that it intended to sever ties with the prime minister, Liow said the party had cautioned the members to refer to the MCA's Central Committee before making any statements.

"They have agreed to follow what we proposed, and statements should be referred to us first."

Last Sunday, the media quoted Pasir Gudang MCA Youth chief Chia Chow Hui as saying the division would sever ties with Najib, following the prime minister's support for the Red-Shirt rally.

Chia had said the division's Youth members would not attend or support Najib's events.

Liow was also asked about the police's intention to arrest Coalition of Malay NGOs chairman Datuk Jamal Md Yunus for threatening to hold another rally in Jalan Petaling tomorrow.

Liow said: "We not only want the police to take action against any party bent on holding illegal rallies and street demonstrations, but they should also be taken to court and sentenced."