

Cap Umno's 'sordid' attempts at stoking religious fire, Pakatan tells Najib
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By Ida Lim and Thanusya Shanmuganathan

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 19 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak must act now and snuff out once and for all attempts by his ruling Barisan Nasional's (BN) main party to inflame religious sensitivities in the run-up to national polls, his political foes from Pakatan Rakyat (PR) reminded the prime minister today as they denounced a controversial Facebook posting in Umno Youth's official page yesterday.

The controversial poster, which was taken down several hours after it appeared on the political youth wing's social network site early yesterday afternoon, had read: "Jika anda setuju untuk jadikan KRISTIAN sebagai agama rasmi persekutuan Malaysia, teruskan sokongan anda kepada Pakatan Rakyat. (If you agree to make CHRISTIANITY the official religion of the federation of Malaysia, continue supporting Pakatan Rakyat.) 'God bless you my son'."

DAP national organising secretary Teresa Kok called the Facebook post a "childish" move, and urged Najib, who is Umno president and chairman of the 13-member BN coalition, to act on the matter.

"I think Najib has to really look into his own party... there are certain elements in the party trying to destroy the country by playing religious fire (sic)," she told The Malaysian Insider today, adding that it was an attempt to "spoil" the existing religious- and racial-harmony.

"I think Najib should seriously look into it, otherwise his slogan of 1 Malaysia will become a laughing stock," said the Seputeh MP, noting that it was posted before the Muslim Aidilfitri holiday today, which she said is also "celebrated by all races".

Kok — who was at the Selangor menteri besar's Aidilfitri open house party in Shah Alam — said she was glad that Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin acted swiftly on the matter and removed the incendiary poster from the wing's Facebook wall within hours of its appearance.

The Umno Youth chief had yesterday denied that the picture was uploaded by members of his team or that the wing supported the statement. The poster was taken down from the website at about 6.30pm yesterday.

PAS vice president Datuk Mahfuz Omar said "the statement in Pemuda Umno's page clearly shows it is influenced by sentiments shown by Umno and the mainstream media", adding that the spread of such sentiments "will in the end cause unrest."

"Although Pemuda Umno say they do not censor what is posted on the Facebook page, the reality is this is the result of Umno and the mainstream media's attitude," he said, calling the youth wing by its Malay name.

He said the move is intended to "scare Muslim voters to make them afraid to vote for Pakatan Rakyat (PR)", but adds that Malaysians are "mature" enough to be unaffected by such "provocations".

PKR's vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar also condemned the poster, calling it a "sordid display of bigotry, lies and irresponsibility by an organ (of) the ruling party."

"At the very least, the Pakatan Rakyat deserves an immediate apology," she said in a text message to The Malaysian Insider in an immediate response to the poster yesterday.

"I await the authorities' speedy action to charge the person held responsible for any posts on the Umno Youth FB Page," she said, noting that Section 114A of the Evidence Act would be a relevant law.

The prime minister had said on Twitter last week that the federal government would revisit Section 114A that presumes guilt on an accused person prosecuted for cyber-offences, but Information, Communications and Culture Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim later said the law, that was passed by Parliament in April and came into force last month, would stay.

Yesterday's Facebook picture provoked an uproar on the popular social network with some cyber citizens supporting the statement and others condemning the Umno youth wing for attempting to fan emotions and religious sentiments between Christians and Muslims on the eve of Aidilfitri, one of the biggest holidays in multicultural Malaysia's calendar.

The Facebook post appeared to suggest that a vote for PR will catapult Christianity into Islam's unquestioned position as Malaysia's religion, showing that faith is still being used to scare off the crucial Malay-Muslim vote in the run-up to national polls.

The picture is a reminder of Malay daily Utusan Malaysia, which last year placed on its front page an unsubstantiated report suggesting that the DAP was conspiring with the Church to install a Christian as prime minister and create a Christian Malaysian state.

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