

Sarawak sees red over Dr M's ISA call

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KUCHING: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's suggestion to revive the dreaded Internal Security Act (ISA) to quell dissent over the Allah issue has been red-flagged in Borneo.

His latest suggestion to re-implement the ISA to deal with "certain extremist groups" which he described as "immature and reckless" and out to destabilize the country is being seen as directed towards Sarawak's vocal clergy and its Dayak leaders.

Mahathir, who has been blamed for Sabah's woes over the exponential illegal immigrant population and neutralising a once majority Christian state, has now touched a raw nerve in Sarawak.

Sarawak is a Christian majority state and has been suffering under Umno-influenced policies seen as anti-Christian.

The raid in Selangor earlier this month and the seizure of over 300 bibles in Iban and Malay has seen the local clergy strongly voice their views.

Sarawak Chief Minister Taib Mahmud has also reiterated religious freedom in the state and the status quo as detailed in the Malaysia Agreement.

A angry Dayak majority Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS) has lambasted Dr Mahathir for labeling Christians in Sarawak and Sabah as "extremists".

Said PRS supreme council member Richard Will Uban: "This kind of statement is very much uncalled for especially from a statesman.

"We are very much indebted to him and wish him to retire well but it is unfortunate that certain quarters in Umno have lost their good judgment.

"They have forgotten the gesture of the minority group in Sarawak and in Sabah whom they have taken as their 'fixed deposit'."

He further warned that the current volley of statements would cost the ruling party.

"If this is politically motivated and they are desperate to win back the Malay votes, then they have chosen to do it at the expense of their fixed deposit partners.

"This unwise and ungrateful move is definitely not welcomed to both the minority in Sarawak and Sabah and on top of that (we are) being labeled as "extremists"," he said.

Ulterior motive

Meanwhile on the same issue Borneo Post quoted Will Uban as saying that leaders who “capitalized” on sensitive issues such as race and religion had shown that they were “insincere” to Sarawak and Sabah.

“The same goes to others whom these leaders have politically coerced to be partners just for the benefit of certain quarters with ulterior motives and whose interest were only to remain in power, “ he said alluding to Umno-linked Perkasa who supported Dr Mahathir call to revive ISA and suggested a referendum be held on the issue.

Wil Uban reiterated a now common statement that Malaysia was not formed through an existence of a single state nor race or religion but by a convention and through the consensus of the autonomous states of Sarawak and Sabah.

“Never was it meant for any single dominant race or religion to impose their will or lord it over the others.

“While Islam was agreed upon as an official religion of the country, it did not mean that its followers were above the constitution, “ he said in reference to the raid in Selangor during which over 300 bibles in Iban and Malay were confiscated and the ongoing Allah row.

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