

**BN Ensures Freedom Of Religion For Non-Muslims - Muhyiddin
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BUKIT MERTAJAM, April 30 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) remains committed in ensuring the freedom of religion among the non-Muslims as a policy of the federal government, reiterated Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today.

The deputy prime minister said the solidarity practiced in the country for so long had always been a model for the other countries, and Malaysians should take pride and endeavour to uphold this noble value.

"Our nation has gained independence for more than 57 years...and our country has achieved much progress and development. This is because we succeeded in creating close understanding between the various races and religions in the country based on the Federal Constitution.

"Although Islam is the official religion of the Federation, the position of the other faiths in Malaysia remains guaranteed. This is what I said just now, guaranteed...(and) as long as the BN is in power, we will ensure that the freedom of religion is protected," he said.

Muhyiddin, who is also UMNO deputy president and director of the BN machinery for the Permatang Pauh by-election, said this when addressing a gathering of the Siamese community at the Rajaphohong Siamese Temple, Kampung Teluk Wang, here today.

Also present at the function were Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan) president Datuk Mah Siew Keong, Penang UMNO Liaison chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman, Permatang Pauh Gerakan division head Koo Sin, and the BN candidate for the Permatang Pauh parliamentary by-election, Suhaimi Sabudin.

In his speech, Muhyiddin pointed out that it was important for peace to be maintained, to enable the Federal Government to concentrate on the development agenda for the benefit of the people.

The deputy prime minister said if there were continuous conflicts, doubts, and disputes between the various religions in the country, these would certainly hinder Malaysia's growth and eventually cause the people to be in misery.

"These are all Malaysians, this is our country and we all live and die here. That's why the BN must ensure there is no dispute or crisis so that we can spend time on developing the nation.

"We know that our country is safe...(but) we (sometime) don't appreciate the peace because we don't make any comparison. But if we go to a country that is in upheaval, we can see the people are poor and find difficulty to get food," he said.

As such, he called on the Siamese community in the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency to give their support to the candidate fielded by the BN to ensure that their welfare was looked after, thus ensuring peace and harmony to be maintained under the Federal Government.

The deputy prime minister, who is also the education minister, also announced an allocation of RM30,000 for a 20-year-old Siamese community school at the Rajaphohong Siamese Temple, which has 30 students from the primary and secondary levels.

The Permatang Pauh by-election, set for May 7, would see a four-cornered fight between Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (PKR candidate), Suhaimi Sabudin (Barisan Nasional), Salleh Isahak (Independent) and Azman Shah Othman (Parti Rakyat Malaysia).

The by-election is being held following the decision of the Pardons Board to reject a royal pardon petition sought by Anwar via his family members which subsequently disqualified the PKR de facto leader as an elected representative.

Anwar is serving a five-year jail term for sodomy.

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