

Vandalism at Siamese temple work of mentally unsound person, says Anwar
Malaysian Insider
Jan 3, 2015
BY HIMANSHU BHATT

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today said the act of vandalism by an unidentified individual at a Siamese Buddhist temple in his constituency of Permatang Pauh yesterday was the work of a "mentally unstable" person.

He said all the local Muslim preachers and leaders whom he met since the incident have expressed their disagreement and concern over the act.

"I visited a few mosques this morning and heard the local religious leaders there wondering how anyone could have done this," he said during a visit to the century-old Wat Chantararam temple at Tanah Liat in Seberang Perai.

"I thank my friends and worshippers at this temple for understanding that this is not the attitude of Muslims," he said.

Also present were Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, temple committee chairman Koh Kok Weng and its chief priest, Reverend Chan Pin.

In the incident about 10am yesterday, a man wearing a "kopiah" cap rode a motorcycle into the temple compound and damaged three deities, hitting and pushing them to the ground.

The act was captured by the temple's closed-circuit television cameras. Police have stationed a few officers at the site since yesterday and no other untoward incident has been reported.

Seberang Perai Tengah district police chief ACP Rusli Mohd Noor, who was also there, said the CCTV visuals were not clear enough to determine the man's profile or the motorcycle's licence plates.

He said the police have sent the CCTV footage for forensic investigation.

Anwar added that he received a call yesterday from a prominent acquaintance in Bangkok, where news of the incident has been publicised, who expressed concern about what was reported.

Koh, who lodged the police report on the vandalism at 4pm yesterday, said the damage done was an invaluable historical loss as the three deities were more than 50 years old.

"This is such a pity. The devotees were very depressed yesterday," he said.

"Something like this has never been known to happen before in the 100-odd years this temple has been here," he said, adding that the temple community enjoys a healthy and harmonious relationship with the neighbourhood, including an old mosque nearby.

He added that the temple, one of about eight Siamese Buddhist temples in Penang, is well-known among the Malaysian Siamese community and in Thailand.

He said the devotees understood that the culprit must have some mental problem.

The CCTV recordings from various cameras showed the man walking around calmly before breaking the deities.

He was also seen later mounting his motorbike and riding in circles in the compound, as though taunting the few shocked devotees who rushed out of the temple's hall. At one point he appeared to zoom towards some of the devotees in a mocking gesture of trying to run them down.

Lim said it was obvious that the man was mentally unstable.

"But this is also dangerous, because an mentally unstable person like this can do it again," he said. "Yesterday it was a temple, the next time he could do it to a mosque."

He added that no Muslim would approve of the act, especially as today is the Muslim auspicious occasion of Maulidur Rasul.

He said the state will provide some financial compensation to the temple, which he described as one of the state's heritage sites. – January 3, 3015.

Hakcipta © 2013 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/vandalism-at-siamese-temple-work-of-mentally-unsound-person-says-anwar>