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DR M: I'LL RESIGN IF PAS PROVES I SAID SUCH A THING IN MY BOOK

SUNGEI PETANI, Feb. 11. — Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad challenged PAS leaders including Datuk Mohamed Asri Muda and Datuk Abu Bakar Umar today to swear in a mosque by their allegation that he (Dr. Mahathir) had written in his book "as long as the Malays believe in Islam they will remain backward."

"If PAS leaders can prove that I have written this in my book (The Malay Dilemma) I will resign as Deputy Prime Minister," he said.

"But if they cannot prove it, then they must come forward and admit publicly that they have lied."

The Deputy Prime Minister said although his book was banned, a copy was available in the library of the University of Malaya and PAS members could have had access to it.

He said he understood that PAS would be distributing pamphlets soon on the matter.

PAS' aim in doing this, he said, was to run him down. Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir was addressing Umno members of the Sungei Petani division.

'Eagles'

He said that he did not wish to publicly refute PAS claims by saying that he had not written such a thing in his book.

"If I say I did not write this, PAS leaders will in turn ask why the book is banned," he said.

Describing PAS leaders as "black eagles", Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said this was a typical example of their habit of running people down.

"In actual fact, PAS leaders are worse," he added.

He made it clear that he was not blaming PAS members because they had to follow their leaders.

Benefits

He said it was essential to remember what the Government has done for the benefit of the people. For 20 years, Umno leaders had done much not only for the party but also for the Malays and other races in the country.

Umno leaders, he said, had not misused their powers as PAS leaders had when they ruled Kelantan. In fighting for Malay rights, Umno had not taken away the rights of other races.

"Umno must remain strong and active in order to continue working for the present and future generations. As long as Umno does not go against Islam, it will succeed in its struggle for the betterment of the Malay masses."

Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir said Umno's achievements were many, and the party had done much for religion even before PAS joined the National Front.