

Mahathir —

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Pas no longer welcome

KOTA BARU, Thurs. —
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today officially withdrew the long-standing Barisan Nasional invitation to Pas to join the coalition.

And instead he invited Pas members to join Umno since Pas, as a party was not willing to join Barisan Nasional.

The Prime Minister last asked Pas to come back to the fold in March during his visit to Besut, a Trengganu district beset by disunity between Pas and Umno supporters.

Opening the Kota Baru Umno division delegates meeting this afternoon, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir hit out at Pas, saying that because of the party's divisive activities, the Government could not channel all its attention towards national development and resilience.

He said it was because the Government had to divert its resources to the Pas problem that "we haven't reached our objectives."

Later Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was "very concerned" with developments in Trengganu.

Asked if the Federal Government was planning to take any action, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was not prepared to comment but added "we are studying the situation."

Devoting much of his speech on Pas, the Prime Minister said it might be better if the party was dissolved.

"I invited Pas to join the Barisan but the invitation has been rejected.

"Now there is no need for Pas to join the Barisan. Instead, we invite Pas members to join Umno.

Infidels

"If there are problems we can solve them as Muslims."

And Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added that the Barisan Nasional, after developing a trust for the former Pas supporters, could even choose them as "Wakil Rakyat."

The Prime Minister also urged all Umno members not to treat Pas supporters harshly as they were only people who had lost their way.

He said it was his hope that every Umno member would work towards pulling these people back along the true path.

"As Muslims, it should be our aim to enlighten those who are lost.

"There is no need to get angry with them," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir pointed out that the Malays before Independence were united as exemplified in their fight against the Malayan Union, but now that they can determine their own future, it is regretful that groups exist to break them up.

He said Pas was merely using Islam as a tool to gain power to set up a government.

"Never in our history have we heard of Muslims branding other Muslims as infidels or praying with two imams.

"But this disarray only occurs with the existence of Pas."

He said the disunity among Muslims in West Asia that had led to their inability to defend themselves against only three million Jews, was due to the presence of people "like those we meet in Besut."

They cause disunity until it is not possible for the Muslims to strengthen their position and their power in the face of adversity.