

MAHATHIR-PAS

PETALING JAYA, AUG. 25 (BERNAMA)-- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY CHALLENGED PAS TO A PUBLIC DEBATE WITH UMNO ON ALL TOPICS INCLUDING THE ASSIMILATION OF ISLAM IN THE NATION'S ADMINISTRATION.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE DEBATE, COULD BE TELECAST LIVE BY TELEVISION MALAYSIA IF THE OPPOSITION PARTY SO DESIRED.

IT COULD BE HELD PREFERABLY WITH PAS VICE-PRESIDENT HAJI HADI AWANG AND UMNO WOULD NOMINATE SOMEONE WHO WOULD DEBATE WITH HIM ON ISLAM.

HE SAID HE WAS WILLING TO DISCUSS WITH HAJI HADI TOPICS LIKE GLOBAL ECONOMICS, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND MEDICINE.

+I AM ALSO WILLING TO TALK WITH PAS ON SOLVING THEIR PARTY PROBLEMS AND THEIR CONFUSIONS. UMNO WILL WANT A DEBATE WITH HIM (HAJI HADI) OVER TELEVISION IF HE WANTS TO.

I AM, HOWEVER, NOT WILLING TO TALK WITH HIM ON ISLAM AS HE IS MORE COMPETENT IN THAT FIELD AND WILL MAKE USE OF IT TO DISTORT THE FACTS AND MAY CONFUSE ME, + HE TOLD REPORTERS, AFTER OPENING THE SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE KOOP BERSATU, AN UMNO COOPERATIVE SOCIETY, AT THE SUBANG VIEW HOTEL NEAR HERE. --MORE

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MAHATHIR-PAS

2

PETALING JAYA

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT IF HAJI HADI INSISTED ON A DEBATE ON ISLAM, UMNO WOULD NOMINATE A SPEAKER WHO COULD ARGUE WITH HIM ON THE SAME TERMS.

+IF HE WANTS TO TALK WITH ME ON WORLD ECONOMICS, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND OTHER THINGS INCLUDING "MEDICINE, OKAY, I CAN DISCUSS (THESE) WITH HIM.

+BUT IF HE THINKS HE CAN ONLY DISCUSS AREAS WHICH HE UNDERSTANDS BETTER THAN I DO, WELL WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO CAN ARGUE WITH HIM ON THESE MATTERS) ALSO. +

HE WAS COMMENTING ON HAJI HADI'S INTERVIEW WITH A HONG KONG-BASED MAGAZINE ALLEGING THAT PAS HAD REPEATEDLY AND OPENLY OFFERED ITS HAND OF COOPERATION BUT UMNO WAS ARROGANT.

+I MYSELF MENTIONED IN THE TERENGGANU STATE ASSEMBLY THAT WE ARE WILLING TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT. WE WANT TO TALK THINGS OVER. BUT THEY ARE ARROGANT, + HAJI HADI WAS QUOTED TO HAVE SAID IN THE INTERVIEW IN THE MAGAZINE'S LATEST EDITION WHICH IS NOW AVAILABLE LOCALLY, --MORE

MAHATHIR-PAS 3 PETALING JAYA.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS UMNO PRESIDENT, DID NOT SEE WHY HE SHOULD DEBATE WITH HAJI HADI ON ISLAM.

HE STRESSED THAT HE HAD NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT AS FAR AS +MY ISLAM+ IS CONCERNED.

ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BETTER IF HE DEBATED WITH USTAZ HADI ON ISLAM, THE PRIME MINISTER RESPONDED: +IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ENLIGHTEN HIM (HAJI HADI) BECAUSE HE INSISTS ON SAYING THE WRONG THINGS EVEN IF IT IS OBVIOUS.+

HE ALSO CHIDED PAS FOR I-I-S RECENT STATEMENT THAT UMNO SHOULD BE THE ONE TO LIST OUT ITS STRATEGIES FOR ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS UMNO WAS THE PARTY GIVEN THE MANDATE BY THE PEOPLE TO ADMINISTER THE COUNTRY.

+THEY (PAS LEADERS) ARE ALWAYS SAYING UMNO IS NOT DOING 'SOMETHING'. WE'LL TELL US WHAT THAT 'SOMETHING' IS THAT WE ARE NOT DOING,+ HE SAID.

SHE PRIME MINISTER THEN LISTED OUT THE PROJECTS CARRIED OUT IN THE INTERESTS OF MUSLIMS IN THE COUNTRY INCLUDING BANK ISLAM, THE ISLAMIC INSURANCE SYSTEM, INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY AND THE ASSIMILIATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES IN THE ADMINISTRATION.

+BUT OF COURSE PAS HAS BLINKERS ON. THEY ONLY SEE WHAT THEY WANT TO SEE .+ --MORE

MAHATHIR-PAS 4 PETALING JAYA

THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE RECENT WAVE OF EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRY PROPAGATED BY CERTAIN GROUPS OF PEOPLE"

+WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES DO NOT DISRUPT THE LIFE OF MALAYSIANS,+ HE ADDED.

THE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED REFUSAL BY SOME RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS TO HAVE THEIR PUPILS SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

HE SAID HE WOULD COMMENT ON THIS WHEN HE OBTAINED THE FULL REPORT.

--BERNAMA