

GAUGING NATURE OF SUPPORT FOR P.M. AND BARISAN

News - 6 APR 1986

KUALA TERENGGANU, Sat. — Is the Barisan Nasional ready to return to the people for a fresh mandate now that the Prime Minister has almost completed his tour of the nation?

After a three-day visit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today left Terengganu — his last stop in the peninsular States in an itinerary which began with Negri Sembilan.

Next week, he is expected to visit Sarawak. In each State he visited he addressed large crowds who turned up to welcome him or watch him officiate at some project or other.

He has met State Barisan Nasional leaders and they have all pledged their loyalty to him as Prime Minister. The leaders have also briefed him on the political developments on the ground.

In short, they have told him not to worry as the opposition parties

PARTY WORKERS TOLD TO WORK HARDER

By ZAINON AHMAD

Another question asked was whether the Barisan Nasional was strong enough to go to the polls? To a certain extent there is already a scramble for seats. Then, there are matters related to Mr Tan Koon Swan and Datuk Musa Hitam.

While these questions may be bugging Dr Mahathir, he seemed happy with his visit to Terengganu.

He was probably amused by the many Pas banners and posters that were put up along the routes that he took. That they were put up for his benefit, there was no doubt considering many were not there the day before his arrival.

Some were put up just a few hours before. Today, there were new ones which were not there when he arrived.

sought to remove non-Islamic admixtures in the religion, some Pas leaders were encouraging their followers to believe in them.

Their advocacy of a belief in invincibility had caused many of their followers to lose their lives in Memali.

"Even the Prophet was not invincible. He was wounded in a battle. If God wanted to make Muslims invincible surely he would have made the Prophet invincible?"

Another non-Islamic practice is the veneration of the dead. But Pas encourages it by having its followers visit the graves of those who died in Memali.

The Prime Minister said, in the first place, those who died there were not martyrs.

He said it was also

cannot hope to deny the Barisan Nasional a two-thirds majority in Parliament and the State Assemblies.

Support

It was all very soothing and the Prime Minister smiled with satisfaction. But he also has other sources from which to gauge the support the Barisan Nasional has at the moment.

To party workers, he stressed the need to work harder than in previous elections to ensure that the Barisan Nasional wins at least two-thirds of the seats up for contest.

"We must win two-thirds of the seats if we are to head effective Governments," he said.

Many said they detected concern in Dr Mahathir's voice when he spoke to party workers.

Others maintained that the note of concern was contrived and that it was a strategy designed to ensure that party workers worked harder and were not over-confident.

What has the Prime Minister gauged from his tour of the peninsular States? Are the Barisan Nasional component parties ready for the election if it is held in May?

Is the extent of the support strong enough to withstand the onslaught of the opposition parties which are expected to exploit issues like BMF, Memali, Sabah and the economic slowdown?

Some were the standard Pas banners of a white moon on a green background. Others contained slogans including the words "Vote for Pas".

There were a few banners and posters which criticised Dr Mahathir.

Pas also put up welcome banners but they were evidently for former Kedah ex-member Datuk Mohamed Muslim Othman, whose visit to conduct a series of *ceramahs* coincided with that of Dr Mahathir.

Datuk Muslim, who joined Pas recently, was touted as the former acting Menteri Besar of Kedah.

However, it must be gratifying to Barisan Nasional leaders to note that on Friday morning, when Dr Mahathir opened the Chendering Port, attendance at Pas State Commissioner Haji Hadi Awang's weekly *ceramah* at Rusila was noticeably smaller.

In all his speeches in the State during the visit, the Prime Minister was critical of Pas.

He appealed to Pas followers to desert their leaders whom he said had misled them with wrong teachings through the misinterpretation of the Quran and *Hadis*.

Dr Mahathir said the Pas leaders sought destruction rather than nation building. He said they sought to cause disunity among the Muslim community.

He said that while most Muslim teachers

wrong for the Pas leaders to claim that the bodies of those who died emitted a sweet smell as they had died martyrs.

Graves

He said probably some of the Pas members in Baling were constantly pouring *minyak atar* (perfumed oil) on the graves of those who died in Memali and that was why the graves emitted the sweet smell.

Some who visited the graves have even taken handfuls of the soil to keep as religious objects.

"This is wrong and against Islam," he said.

However, he acknowledged Haji Hadi was an expert in the religion but said that since he was also a politician "he misinterpreted the religious texts to suit his political objectives".

All his speeches were monitored by Pas and in their *ceramahs* during the two nights the Prime Minister was in Terengganu, Pas leaders criticised Dr Mahathir.

They told their followers that the views of Dr Mahathir were the views of a man misguided by his religious teachers.

Met at the Rusila mosque and asked for his comments on the Prime Minister's criticism of some Pas leaders for misinterpreting the Quran and *Hadis*, Haji Hadi said:

"Well, he has his teachers to rely on and we have our teachers to rely on."