

Government won't force non-Muslims

By Rohiman Haroon

BUKIT MERTAJAM, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today assured Muslims that the Government would not misuse its powers to force them to embrace Islam.

The Prime Minister said the Government had always believed in freedom of religion and would not suppress the non-Muslims and prevent them from practising their own beliefs.

“It is the right of citizens to choose their religion. Neither the Government nor Umno has any intention of depriving non-Muslims of their rights particularly in matters of religion,” he told a gathering at the Permatang Pauh Umno division building in Sungai Semambu, Permatang Pauh.

Dr Mahathir said the Government and Umno were also aware of the limits and sensitivities pertaining to religion.

However, he was disappointed that of

late, certain quarters have doubted and questioned the Government's honesty on the position of non-Muslims and their religious beliefs.

It was unfair of these people to maliciously accuse the Government and Umno of attempting to suppress and convert the non-Muslims by force.

The Government's track record was ample proof that it had never suppressed the non-Muslims from practising their

to embrace Islam, says PM

religious beliefs, he said, adding it “would never do so as long as it ruled the country.”

He said there would be chaos if the opposition especially Pas took over the administration of the country.

Dr Mahathir said certain countries stopped their people from carrying out religious rites or build temples and mosques.

“In Britain, for instance, it is difficult

to find Hindu or Chinese temples as the authorities do not encourage the construction of such buildings.

“Worse still, mosques in certain parts of the Soviet Union like Azerbaijan have been turned into museums. The Muslims have been deprived of their basic rights to believe in the religion.”

On the contrary, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians were fortunate that they could build mosques and temples without any

hindrance by the authorities.

The Prime Minister said the Government had always adopted a moderate stand when it concerned religious beliefs of the people.

“We must be tolerant, fair and respect each other's religious beliefs,” he said, adding that if people of different religious faiths “do not deviate from this mutual understanding, we can rest assured that peace and harmony will prevail.”