

Tolerance is needed, says Dr Mahathir

By Ahmad A. Talib and Hisham Mahzan

KOTA BARU, Mon. — Multiracial and multireligious Malaysia needs a Government which can promote tolerance and harmony among the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said such tolerance would pave the way for more progress and prosperity, elements which were essential in maintaining political stability in the country.

Dr Mahathir said the power-sharing concept adopted by the Barisan Nasional had proven to be the most appropriate and effective for plural Malaysia. Hence, the BN should be allowed to continue to promote the concept as it had proven to be successful.

ful in helping the country to progress.

The system of administration as advocated by Pas was not suited for a multiracial society, he said, adding that as a party which claimed to uphold Islamic principles, Pas should demonstrate fairness, tolerance and understanding.

"Trying to impose Pas' values on sections of the people who do not share similar beliefs would not endear the party to the people.

"In fact, this will lend a wrong image of Islam as a principle in governance."

The Prime Minister was speaking to a packed audience at the Chinese Assembly Hall here organised by the Kelantan BN. Earlier in the day, Dr Mahathir declared open the National Youth Assembly.

Dr Mahathir said Islam had always been fair when used as a principle of administration.

When Islam was the ruling power in many parts of Europe, it was fair and a sense of justice prevailed. But its reign ended when narrow interpretations of the religion led to disunity.

Dr Mahathir said it appeared that Pas' reign in Kelantan would face a similar fate because it had tried to impose its values on people who did not share the same sentiments.

Furthermore, Pas' promises made either on its own or with its political ally Semangat 46 have not been delivered. Promises made during the run-up to the general election in 1990 have not been kept.

The Prime Minister said: "In Islam, promises made must be kept. I would like to ask Pas leaders if they had kept to their promises."

Semangat 46 has not received due recognition from Pas. It is increasingly playing second fiddle in the Pas-led State Government.

Islam never discouraged the creation and accumulation of wealth, but these efforts had to be continued so that the image of Islam could be corrected.

Islam was progressive and Muslims had a duty to correct some of the misconceptions about the religion that it was backward and not supportive of prosperity, he added.

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