

# Party using religion for political gain, says Dr Pas not synonymous with

## Mahathir Islam

By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno leaders and members must make the people understand that Pas is a political party and is not synonymous with Islam.

The Umno president said Umno leaders must help convince the people that Pas' claim that "Pas is Islam and Islam is Pas" was very misleading.

Dr Mahathir said that the Parti Islam SeMalaya also had no right to use Islam in its name or use the religion for its political interests.

"I want to make it clear that Pas does not struggle for Islam, but strives for political gains," he said.

He regretted that some Umno members were confused with this issue and noted that some had not wanted the word Islam to be removed from Pas's name.

The Prime Minister said that Umno members must also be fully convinced that Pas was only a political party and not an Islamic party and that it was Umno — and not Pas — which really struggled for Islam.

"There is only one parti Islam (that is the Islamic religion) in the world of which every Muslim is a member," he said.

He said that since its formation in 1946, Umno had proven that it had done a lot for the religion while Pas had all along been using Islam for political and material benefits.

confidence among Umno members themselves on Umno's religious conviction.

"They seem not to believe Umno struggles for religion, though the matter is even stated in its constitution," he said.

Dr Mahathir got a positive response from the packed audience in the Dewan Merdeka comprising Umno divisional and branch leaders from all over the country when he asked them whether they were confident that it was Umno which actually fought for Islam.

Among the over 5,000 people present were deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, vice presidents and supreme council members.

The Prime Minister explained at length the history leading to the formation of Parti Islam SeMalaya or Pas, saying that the opposition party would do anything possible, including distorting facts and misinterpreting the meaning of the Quran, to achieve its goal.

After its establishment, Pas made many religious interpretations that had caused a split among the Malays.

The first proof that Pas was not struggling for religion was during the first general election in 1955 during the British rule, when the party considered that Malaya was not yet ready for "merdeka" while Umno and the other parties in the

"Umno members must be able to explain this to the people. Otherwise Pas will continue to use religion to split the people for its own gains," Dr Mahathir said in his Penerangan Perdana, organised by party information committee at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He expressed regret that there seemed to be a lack of

Alliance were struggling for independence from the beginning.

"We must also explain to the people that Umno, and not Pas, which struggles for Islam," he said.

He hoped the 49-page book by Umno Information Committee entitled *Pas Pentingkan Politik Daripada Agama* (Pas Places More

Importance to Politics than Religion) which was distributed among party machinery would help them make Pas members understand the true colour of their own

party.

Dr Mahathir said that Pas had also used religion extensively to win the people's support, even to the extent of accusing Umno members

of being infidels.

Through their tactics, he said, Pas had managed to convince the people that its struggle was for Islam and as a result wrested control

over Kelantan and Terengganu.

Pas, he said, had also managed to instigate religious teachers who had no place in politics to criticise

Umno by giving them the impression they would be given positions.

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# Party members asked to counter accusations

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"I do not deny the fact that they (some Pas leaders) are educated in religion, but they are not afraid to make false accusations. To get places in politics, they are prepared to do things contrary to religion," he said.

He said that Pas leaders were not concerned with the consequences of the false accusations they made.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the issue of *riba* (usury), saying that the Barisan Nasional Government had introduced Bank Islam (which was *riba* free). The introduction of the Islamic bank system had attracted several countries to send their representatives to learn it from Malaysia.

He said the Government had also provided numerous facilities in the field of religion, including introduction of additional religious studies at universities.

"Today the world acknowledges Malaysia as a country where Islam is being adopted without chaos, unlike some countries which experience endless riots and wars," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped Umno members, especially those involved in the information machinery, would be more

confident in their information dissemination exercise among the people to help counter Pas' accusations against Umno.

He said the people should be made to understand that Umno never accused Pas leaders and members as infidels as it (Umno) realised that it was not its right to do so.

"But it is Pas which unashamedly accused Umno of being infidels to the extent of not wanting to pray with Umno members or share the same burial ground. They do this to hold the Muslims at ransom," he said.

Dr Mahathir quoted a Pas speaker known as Alwi as addressing a rally that Pas supporters would receive *rahmat* (blessing) from God and quoted a quranic verse which he (Alwi) interpreted as follows:

"If you really help God's religion, God will help you and strengthen your conviction and you will not be influenced by money and subsidy distributed by the Barisan Nasional Government leaders."

Dr Mahathir said he was surprised that the translation of the verse contained words like money, subsidy and even BN.