

PM injects confidence by presence in Pas stronghold

KUALA TERENGGANU, Fri. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presence at a meet-the-people gathering at Kampung Seberang Marang attended by an estimated 5,000 people has given new hope for the Barisan Nasional in Marang.

Kampung Seberang Marang in the Rhu Rendang State constituency is one of the 23 polling streams where Pas deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang has control over with a majority of 853 votes in the 1990 general election. Rhu Rendang is Abdul Hadi's fort in Marang based on his victory in the last three elections.

The large crowd occupying nearly every space available in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seberang Marang should

have given Abdul Hadi the jitters and his challenger Bakar Seman @ Abu Bakar Seman, a former penghulu, renewed confidence.

The intrusion by some Pas workers who put up their party symbol on bamboo stakes along the small road leading to the school had no effect on the flow of the crowd who were given the rare opportunity to shake hands with and listen to the Prime Minister.

It cannot be denied that among the crowd were Pas supporters who could not resist the temptation of "getting new information" on political developments and to satisfy their curiosity about the Barisan Nasional top leadership.

The fact that Dr Mahathir read a verse from the Qur-

an, and gave the translated version of other verses to prove that Pas had deviated from the true Islamic teaching and had not been sincere in its struggle was most assuring.

At one stage, Dr Mahathir said: "I, too, can read the Arabic verses of the Quran but if I read them too often, Pas will call me an arrogant person. Even if I read the Arabic version, how many of you will understand its meaning. So, I will rather give you the translation so that everyone can understand its meaning."

Heads were seen nodding to approve what Dr Mahathir said on the need for Muslims to unite and to stop hurting each other's feeling by accusing the group not aligned to them (Pas) of be-

ing apostates.

Dr Mahathir said Pas had no right to label other Muslims as apostates simply because they did not support the party or because they were Barisan Nasional "people", or refuse to eat animals slaughtered by others who are not Pas members.

He went further to say that Pas leaders were undisciplined and had conducted themselves poorly, citing the Mohamad Sabu case as an example.

Dr Mahathir said Pas could have been a good Opposition if the party leaders gave constructive criticism rather than hurling abuse, using vulgar words and confusing the people about Islam in their *ceramah*.

Reiterating that the people should reject any form of

fanaticism, he called on Pas members to at least open their eyes and ears to the things happening around them, including the Government's Islamisation efforts.

He said Pas members "must come out of their shell and accept reality" rather than approve of whatever their leaders say, even if their conscience tells them that it was wrong, as this could be dangerous and turn the followers away from the true teachings.

The impression that Dr Mahathir left with the crowd was that the Barisan Nasional will not use Islam to gain political mileage but will implement the Islamisation effort the way it knows best, that is proving it rather than just harping on it.