

17 NOV 1996

Mahathir-Pas

PAS-UMNO CAN FORM COALITION GOV'T BUT WITH CONDITIONS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 (BERNAMA) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said PAS and UMNO can form a coalition government in Kelantan provided that Umno is not forced to give in to all of Pas' demands.

"They want a coalition government, we can accept but they have to abide by the views of the majority," he told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang on his return from a 16-day official visit abroad which took him to two continents -- Africa and Europe.

The Prime Minister said Pas must also be sincere and should not regard Umno as unIslamic.

He said Umno was prepared to hold talks with Pas on the proposed coalition government in Kelantan but Pas should first submit their proposals on the matter.

On the plan by Pas to institute court action against the Kelantan Ruler, he said: "We have the courts and if there is any breach of the law, court action can be taken."

Dr Mahathir said UMNO should from the beginning decide on the conditions to form the coalition government proposed by Pas to prevent history from being repeated.

He said when Pas was in the Barisan Nasional in the early 70s, the party had used its position for its own interest to the extent that there were settlers who opposed the government.

"We open land schemes like Felda to provide land to the landless but when a minister from Pas was appointed to look after the land schemes, we found Felda settlers to be Pas supporters and opposed the government," he said.

Asked whether the proposed coalition government was merely a dream and might not materialise, Dr Mahathir said: "earlier there were also dreams like the dissolution of the Parti Melayu Semangat 46 and its members joining Umno as well as Malaysia becoming an industrialised country, these dreams have become a reality."

When asked to comment on the conditions imposed by Pas which might not lead to the realisation of the coalition government, he said this showed that Pas had the intention but did not have the sincerity.

Kelantan Menteri Besar, Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat yesterday said he agreed with the proposal for the formation of a Pas-Umno coalition government in Kelantan but it should be based on Islamic principles and all programmes based on Islam which had been implemented by Pas should be continued and enhanced.

Dr Mahathir also did not discount the possibility of the offer by Pas to form the coalition government being a ploy to make use of Umno in reaching a solution to end the crisis faced by Pas in its relationship with the Kelantan Ruler.

"If they had come up with the proposal (to form the coalition government) much earlier, it could be taken as a sincere move," he said when asked whether Pas wanted to make use of Umno in ending the crisis with the Kelantan palace.

On the invitation by Nik Abdul Aziz to Dr Mahathir to visit the state, the Prime Minister accepted the invitation on condition that it was not turned into a political issue.

In JELI, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed today welcomed the Pas proposal to forge cooperation with Umno to form a

coalition government in Kelantan so that the people in the state no longer had to endure the various problems there.

He, however, hoped that Pas' sincerity would not be merely in making the proposal as previously Pas leaders had spoken about the matter several times but until today the party had not proven it.

"What we regret is that today it says it will cooperate with Umno but in its ceramahs at night, it condemns Umno and hurls all sorts of accusations against the party," he told reporters after opening the parent-teachers' association meeting of Sekolah Kebangsaan Jeli I here.

Mustapa, who is also Jeli Umno division head, said the Barisan Nasional (BN) government led by Umno was doing a splendid job in implementing Islamic programmes and enhancing Islamic virtues.

Nobody including Pas should have any doubts on the government's commitment to Islam. -- BERNAMA

ZI TS/AO