

11/07/1999

PM chides Pas for its plan to auction off Putrajaya

CYBERJAYA, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today chided Pas for wanting to auction off Putrajaya if the party comes to power after the coming general election.

"I am happy ... (seronoklah, saya seronok dia nak lelong). It will be the first time that Pas will auction a mosque.

"I hope Fadzil Noor (Pas president, Datuk Fadzil Noor) will bring a bell and stand in front of the (Putrajaya) mosque and say that the place is suitable to be turned into a shopping complex," Dr Mahathir said at a Press conference at the end of a three-day meeting of the International Advisory Panel.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on Fadzil's statement on Pas' auction plan. Fadzil had said other mega projects would be put up for rental.

On the apostate issue, Dr Mahathir said it was a political gimmick and Pas was not sincere in raising the matter.

Fadzil, at a Pas ceramah near Pontian last night, reportedly denied the auction plan, claiming the issue was being exploited by what he described as "BN-controlled mass media."

Fadzil said: "We will, nevertheless, dispose of the Prime Minister's new official residence. That is for sure."

In Pekan, Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said by charging men RM5 and women RM2 to attend a Pas ceramah in Perlis yesterday, the party had showed that it was willing to do anything to be in power.

"Actually, there is no benefit in attending Pas talks and ceramah as it is more geared towards denouncing others which is against Islam.

"We cannot learn anything by attending the talks organised by Pas except on how to curse and denounce others," he said, adding that the people should not attend the talks or ceramah by Pas.

Wanita Umno head Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said in Kuala Lumpur that the fee plan has revealed Pas' "true colours".

"It shows that even before Pas governs the country, it is already showing its true colours," Siti Zaharah said after launching a seminar on "Understanding Body Language and Grooming for the Right Occasion" today.

Meanwhile, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said Pas had run out of ideas to fuel its election campaign and had resorted to baseless issues in an effort to gain public sympathy.

He said bringing up non-issues like wanting to sell Putrajaya to princes and kings were merely tactics to play on public sympathy to gain support for the coming election.

"This should not be the way. They (Pas) should be campaigning based on issues connected to the manifesto and relevant to the progress of the country," he said after a gotong-royong at Angkasapuri today.

He said the people were wise enough to realise that mega projects, like Putrajaya were cornerstones in attracting foreign investments and were for the long term development of the country.

He said the Government's expenditure on such projects did not mean financial setbacks for other ministries.

"Projects under the Rural Development Ministry and others are progressing as scheduled and have not faced any slowdown whatsoever," he said.

Commenting on a call by Umno Youth for a debate with Pas over television, Khalil, who is also Information Minister, said it may not be advisable to have a live debate as the opposition may use the opportunity for its own agenda.

"I feel that such a debate should be censored and not aired live as the opposition could well deviate from the topic and hit out at the Government," he said.

He said it would be better for such a debate to be held in a hall and issues which could be aired to the public be given media coverage.

On the Istana Kampung Glam issue in Singapore, he said the local media had no hidden agenda whatsoever in reporting the issue.

"We respect the sovereignty of Singapore as a nation and Malaysia is in no way trying to play the big brother role to the Malays there," he said.

He said it was natural for Malaysians, especially the Malays and the media to voice sympathy because the two countries are linked historically and culturally.

Asked if any steps would be taken to prevent further interference from either country on the issue, he said the issue should not become "touchy".

He said there was no special concern among the local media on the issue and the reports were merely part of their normal duties.

(END)