

21/07/2000

Al-Ma'unah linked to Pas (HL)

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that most of the 1,800 members of the Al-Ma'unah deviationist group were also Pas members.

"We (the Government) did not want to politicise this Al-Ma'unah problem at first.

"However, Pas has done so by saying the whole incident was staged by Umno ... that is why I am now forced to reveal that the majority of the Al-Ma'unah members are also Pas members or supporters," he said, adding that the Al-Ma'unah group had some 1,800 members in the country.

"I don't know how many exactly, but most of them are Pas members or support the party.

"Maybe there are also Umno members. There may also be deviant Umno members but the majority (of Al-Ma'unah) are Pas members."

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, was speaking at a Press conference after opening the 2000 Kedah Umno convention here today.

Also present at the convention were Umno vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Abdul Hamid Othman.

The Prime Minister said the Al-Ma'unah group also had the same objectives as Pas.

He said Pas flags, signboards and banners were prominently displayed at Al-Ma'unah centres and on its followers' vehicles.

"They (Al-Ma'unah members) are actually the extreme group of Pas supporters.

"Pas may not actually encourage them, but the fact is that they are members of Pas with extreme views ... it all came about because of Pas' campaign of hate," he said, adding that Al-Ma'unah was the direct result of Pas' campaign to create hatred for the Government.

He said while Al-Ma'unah was not exactly Pas' militant wing, it was made up of Pas members with militant ideas.

The Prime Minister said Al-Ma'unah and Pas strove to establish an Islamic Government without realising the whole world had acknowledged Malaysia as a model Islamic country.

"We don't have to announce that we are an Islamic republic or anything like that ... the world has already acknowledged us (as an Islamic nation)."

Asked if the Government planned to act against Pas, Dr Mahathir said: "We will not take action against Pas except for anything they do which is wrong.

"But we are studying this campaign of hate being propagated by Pas. It is going to cause a lot of destruction as could be seen from the Al-Ma'unah group's actions."

Dr Mahathir was also asked about some quarters that tried to justify Al-Ma'unah followers' action by holding special prayers for them at some mosques.

The Prime Minister said the Government would take action against those who used mosques for such purposes.

On the large number of professionals identified as being Al-Ma'unah members, Dr Mahathir said: "We are not surprised ... even among professionals, there are those who actually believe they can make

themselves invincible.

"They believe you can't shoot and kill them ... these are educated people. Of course, they are educated in terms of their profession but they actually know nothing about Islam. If they know Islam, they would know they can never be invincible."

On calls for the word Islam to be dropped from Pas' name, Dr Mahathir said the Government was studying the proposal.

"A lot of people are confused, especially when the party claims Islam is Pas and Pas is Islam.

"This contradicts the teachings of the religion, as there is nothing to say that Pas is also acknowledged by God."

On Pas leaders' warning they would not be held responsible for their followers' actions if the word Islam was removed from the party name, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, we'll see about the warning.

"If the leaders misbehave, we have every right to take action. We are in charge of security and peace in the country."

In Kuala Lumpur, Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor said the party wants the police to provide the names and identity card numbers of members alleged to be part of Al-Ma'unah.

He said the party would cross-check the names with the membership list.

"This is because we do not keep a record of our members joining silat groups, especially Al-Ma'unah.

"When registering as members, they are not required to list their other activities outside the party," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby.

On the discovery of party symbols at places of Al-Ma'unah, Fadzil said it did not mean that Pas was involved as anyone could have put them up.

Fadzil said the Army and Police should brief Opposition MPs on the Grik arms heists and hostage-taking incident so that the truth can be explained to the people.

Opposition MPs also represented the rakyat and needed information to enable them to explain the issue.

Three weeks after the incident, it was evident that the Government was trying to shift the blame for the incidents to the Opposition.

He said this was why the Opposition had been calling for an independent inquiry to investigate the incident.

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