

21/07/2000

`Unite Malays and prevent them from becoming deviants'

reports on "Kedah Umno Convention 2000" by Zubaida Abu Bakar
UMNO leaders must take the responsibility to reunite the Malays and prevent them from becoming deviants and blindly supporting Pas, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the Malays had become a confused lot of late, following various incidents in the country, all of which clearly showed there was disunity.

"Umno leaders should not be too concerned with getting positions, becoming candidates in elections," he said when opening the Kedah Umno convention here today.

Also present at the two-day convention which started yesterday were Umno vice-presidents Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The Prime Minister said despite claiming to champion Islam, Pas somehow had managed to garner support through various unIslamic means.

While Pas labelled Umno members infidels, the world, he said, recognised Malaysia as an Islamic country.

Dr Mahathir said the Organisation of Islamic Conference, which Malaysia helped set up, recognised Malaysia as a model Islamic nation and its members were proud of Malaysia's achievements.

"Pas also continues to champion its plan to implement Islamic laws in the country despite knowing very well this is something difficult to achieve."

Among the OIC member countries, he said, only Saudi Arabia was implementing hudud and this was possible because the country had a 100 per cent Muslim population.

Dr Mahathir also said it was Umno and not Pas which was fighting the holy war (jihad) as Umno struggled to improve the livelihood of Muslims in the country.

This is especially so in preparing Muslims to compete with the other races in the world, besides improving their political, economic and social status.

"These are Umno's struggles ... to strengthen the Muslims, at least in the country by providing them with knowledge including technological skills, increase their property ownership and economy so that they stand at par with the other races," he said.

Dr Mahathir stressed it was important for Muslims to be strong to gain respect from others.

"If we are strong, we will not be oppressed like the Bosnians, and the world will respect us."

Dr Mahathir said the Malays were united under Umno until a splinter group formed Pas.

Pas, he added, was actually a time-bomb planted by the British to split the Malays after the plan to set up Malayan Union failed. "The Malays should be wary of this."

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