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`Ensure Pas stands for justice, democracy and human rights'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tue. - Malaysian Chinese should reach out and engage with Pas to ensure that it represents a Political Islam in Malaysia which is compatible with justice, democracy, human rights, clean, open and accountable governance and culturalism.

DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang said this in his speech at the Australian National University during a talk organised by the Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora in Canberra yesterday.

Lim, who spoke on "Chinese or Malaysian Identity? Issues and Challenges", focused on the recent general election and the current and future political situation in this country.

He said for over three decades from Independence until the early 1990s, the country expended an enormous amount of national time, energies and attention on the fundamental question of nation-building in Malaysia's plural society - whether it should be on the basis of assimilation or integration.

Lim said it was only in the early 1990s that the Malay political leadership in Government responded to pressures for a nation-building policy based on integration and adopted a more open and liberal attitude towards issues of language, education and culture.

He referred to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 and a Bangsa Malaysia (Malaysian race) in a united Malaysian society with a people who would be entirely Malaysian in perspective - a view which the DAP had always advocated.

"These are certainly healthy and positive developments in the politics of nation-building in Malaysia, although only time can tell as to how deep-seated this embrace of integration is."

He said in the last general election, DAP made the error of believing that if the Barisan Alternatif could reach a common election platform on justice, freedom, democracy and good governance, leaving aside subjects which the component parties could not reach agreement on, it would suffice for the occasion.

"The Opposition Front should be wiser after the general election and the recent Sanggang by-election in Pahang where an expected Pas victory in a constituency it lost narrowly in the general election did not eventuate."

He said Pas would need to spell out its position on an Islamic State and its implications on non-Muslim Malaysians in a nation where less than 60 per cent of the population is Muslim and where other religions like Buddhism (19 per cent) and Christianity (11 per cent), Hinduism (eight per cent) and other religions (nine per cent) such as Sikhism were also strongly represented.

"I need only observe that this situation is not new in the Muslim world as attested by events in Iran where considerable debate is raging on the respective roles of religion, politics and society."

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