

07 JUL 2000

Mahathir-PAS

UMNO MUST DEAL WITH PAS CHALLENGE- DR MAHATHIR

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, July 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said the PAS challenge is something which Umno must deal with to prevent the party from splitting the Muslim community in Malaysia.

The last election was "unusual in that Umno was badly split" between those loyal to the former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and those loyal to Umno, he told Greg Sherian, "The Australian" newspaper foreign editor in an interview in Kuala Lumpur recently.

"PAS was very adroit at exploiting that split and made considerable gains. There are segments of the population drawn to the religious propaganda of PAS. It's really anti-Islamic, but they use the trappings of Islam, like born-again Christians use the trappings of Christianity," Dr Mahathir said.

"They declare that PAS is Islam and Islam is PAS. They equate a political party with a religion. But Islam is not restricted to one political movement."

"They split Malaysians and they split Malays into good Muslims and non-Muslims. It's very difficult to handle, but we stick very closely to the actual teachings of Islam, which accept non-Muslims and do not repress them."

"Islam does not say either, that we should be poorer than anyone else. The Western media tend to label and stereotype Muslims, to picture them as undemocratic, incapable of governing themselves."

"That's wrong. Extremism, fanaticism are not things promoted by Islam. The coming of the Prophet succeeded in overcoming tribal loyalties," he said.

-- BERNAMA

NDC AAM