

'No credentials to criticise'

Nst - 8 APR 2001

Dr Mahathir: Pas does not have track record of good governance

GUA MUSANG, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Pas has no credentials to criticise the Government because it has no qualification nor track record of good governance.

The Umno president cited Pas' willingness to accept loans from the International Monetary Fund which proved to be disastrous to neighbouring Indonesia.

Opening the Gua Musang Umno division meeting, he said Pas was willing to accept the IMF loan even when the Government was criticising the currency speculators' actions.

The IMF and World Bank have since agreed that currency speculators played a part in the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

"Look at Indonesia, which has 220 million people of whom almost 90 per cent are Muslims. When they took up the IMF loan, they had literally surrendered their economic independence.

"If the move to accept the IMF loan was right, then Indonesia would be better off than Malaysia. However, every day we hear of Indonesians trying to cross the ocean to come over here. If the IMF loan was better, then it would have been the other way round, Malaysians trying to go across to Indonesia."

Dr Mahathir said Umno, since independence, had worked hard to provide education to Muslims as it was committed in wanting to make them knowledgeable.

"We build schools, universities and provide scholarships for the Malays. We believe Muslims will be respected when they have knowledge."

However, he said, Pas sent people to universities and distracted the students, declaring that they were

studying secular subjects. Umno, he said, had never sent anyone to universities to distract students from their studies.

"Muslim students are distracted by Pas. Despite having been able to ensure 60 per cent of students in universities are Muslims, their results are mediocre. Non-Muslims, who only occupy 40 per cent of places, are the high achievers."

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was unlucky to have an irresponsible party like Pas which betrayed the Malays and Islam.

"Some may describe what I say as 'too much'. They will say I am not an ulama and, thus, do not have the right to criticise."

Dr Mahathir said Pas these days no longer talked about setting up an Islamic State because it had started working with (DAP deputy chairman) Karpal Singh who has said that it would only be over his dead body that it could be set up.

He said Pas, which had described his party members as infidels, was hypocritical as the only thing Islamic about Pas was the word "Islam" in the party's name.

Dr Mahathir said in the case of Pas labelling other people infidels, it was not the right of any political party.

"Maybe some Malays have left the religion but the party cannot generalise when labelling people infidels.

"There must be a thorough study before reaching a decision of whether one is an infidel or not. But Pas has blatantly managed to declare half the Muslim population in the country as infidels."

At a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said his remarks about Pas should not be a reason for the proposed Malay unity talks between

Umno and Pas to be derailed.

As I have said before, the talks are about deciding on how we should fight for the Malays and defend Islam. We are not asking

Pas to unite with us. They can be enemies but there is nothing wrong with discussing the direction of the Malays and Islam.”

Dr Mahathir said while Umno

was trying to ensure the unity talks took place, Pas attacked Umno. “They hold 100 *ceramah* daily and *maki* (verbally abuse) us.”