

Lim: Dr M likely to be the winner

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PETALING JAYA: Voters are likely to choose Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership of the country over an Islamic state under PAS in the next election, DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang said yesterday.

He said while the Prime Minister would then be close to 80 years old and not likely to remain at the helm of government for long, voting for an Islamic state would be the start of a journey which could not inspire the confidence of Malaysians.

Lim said the opposition front would not have been formed in the first place to take on the Barisan Nasional if PAS was not prepared to respect the opposition of DAP, Parti Keadilan Nasional and Parti Rakyat Malaysia to an Islamic state.

He said PAS leaders had openly disregarded the opposition to an Islamic state and went against the front's manifesto — Towards A Just and Democratic Malaysia — by reiterating their commitment to an Islamic state.

"The front is now at a crossroad. It is no more tenable, with PAS leaders openly flouting the common manifesto," he said in a statement.

He said the issue confront-

ing the Opposition was not anti-Islam sentiments but the fact that an Islamic state in multiracial and multi-religion Malaysia was not compatible with a parliamentary democracy.

However, Malaysian Democratic Party said secretary-general Wee Chee Keong had stated that PAS had been "consistent" in its stand on setting up an Islamic state and had never pledged it would drop its main objective.

He said the opposition front's advertisements in newspapers in 1999 also assured voters that there was no need to fear the Islamisation move as the rights of non-Muslims were guaranteed under the Constitution.

He said DAP leaders were trying hard to regain their political integrity by condemning PAS over its intention to set up an Islamic state.

"Stop blaming PAS over the issue because the DAP leaders themselves joined hands with PAS with their eyes open."

He said the DAP leaders must now take responsibility for misleading voters to support the Islamic party.

In Penang, DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh said PAS deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang's public reiteration that PAS would not compromise on the setting up of an Islamic state was more

than cause for alarm.

He said he could not see how an intellectual discussion could justify the formation of an Islamic state, which was diametrically opposed to the basic structure of the Constitution which provides for a secular state.

"Hadi should not seek to alter the will of the framers of the Constitution."

He said it was difficult to see the logic in Abdul Hadi's statement that PAS would go ahead to set up such a state if it comes to power in the next general election when it is only a digit in the opposition front, unless it had made up its mind to leave the front.

"PAS is the only communal party in the front and it would be best for PAS to leave the front."

He said both Keadilan and PRM should publicly state in the public interest whether they agree to PAS' move to set up the state, adding that he was surprised that both these parties have not come out specifically to oppose PAS' avowed aim to set up the state.

He said the stand taken by Abdul Hadi and PAS president Fadzil Noor demanded a response from both Keadilan and Parti Rakyat.

"Their silence may be taken to mean endorsement of the setting up of an Islamic state."