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Mahathir-PAS

DECEIT BY PAS LEADERS REASON FOR UMNO'S OPPOSITION AGAINST PAS, SAYS PM

GUA MUSANG, April 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the reason for his strong opposition against PAS now is the efforts of PAS leaders who attempt to thwart the progress of Muslims in the country through actions which are contrary to Islamic teachings.

He said that PAS was actually not an Islamic party as claimed by its leaders but a party responsible for undermining the struggles of Muslims.

"They (PAS leaders) are doing things against the teachings of Islam but they are still able to deceive the PAS followers to the extent that they continue to give their support.

"However much we explain to the PAS followers, they keep saying the same thing...that they (PAS leaders) are right, they are Islamic. Actually they have strayed from Islam, in fact undermined the struggles of Muslims," he told a news conference after opening the Gua Musang Umno division's delegates meeting here.

Also present were Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who was returned unopposed as head of the division, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Umno information chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, who is Kelantan Umno liaison chief.

Dr Mahathir said that he had frequently repeated his statements on the deceptions of PAS to make the people aware of the wile tactics of the opposition party.

"Such matters have to be voiced out...if we were to keep quiet, they will succeed even further. At least I hope that Umno members will not be drawn (to it). As for PAS members who are obsessed with PAS, let them. We just cannot change them but Umno members should never be deceived by PAS' argument," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, also refuted allegations that his criticisms of PAS could affect efforts towards Malay unity which also requires the cooperation of PAS.

He said that the issue of unity only related to the interests of the Malays who were members of both parties while in other unrelated areas, PAS and Umno were still rivals.

"They (PAS members) are Malays, we are also Malays...so therefore in this matter (Malay unity) we can unite, not uniting to the extent of becoming one body but united only in making a stand. That is why I've said, we can still continue to be rivals with PAS and PAS can continue to be rivals with us," he said.

He also said that in the effort to attain Malay unity, PAS was still adopting its opposition against Umno and holding "100" ceramah a day all over the place to run down Umno including hurling abuses against Umno leaders and even prepared to label him as "Firaun" (Pharaoh).

Asked to comment on Tengku Razaleigh's call in his speech that he should continue to lead the country, Dr Mahathir said with a smile: "I would like to say thank you. I am already old, should have retired. But if I'm required to work, I'll work. Sometimes you work till you drop dead".

In his speech at the opening of the meeting, Tengku Razaleigh called on Dr Mahathir to review the quota system requiring candidates to obtain sufficient nominations from the branches to be eligible to contest for posts in the divisions.

According to Tengku Razaleigh, this was one of the reasons for money

politics whereby only those with money could contest for posts resulting in the younger generation to stay away from Umno.

To this, the prime minister responded: "Presently, I can only say I will look into the matter. I am prepared to examine every view, see how we can make things better for Umno".

Umno's requirement is that for divisions with fewer than 150 branches, those intending to contest for the post of division chief should obtain 20 per cent of nominations from the branches, for the post of deputy head 15 per cent and vice head 10 per cent.

For divisions with more than 150 branches, the candidates contesting for the post of head of division should secure a minimum of 30 nominations, the deputy head 20 nominations and the vice head 10 nominations.

Asked on the strategy to enable Umno to recapture Kelantan from PAS in the next general election, the prime minister said that more effort would have to be made by Kelantan Umno.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said that PAS' failure in effectively developing and ruling Kelantan even though it had been in power since 1990 should provide a lesson to the people in the country.

He said that PAS, now in power in Kelantan and Terengganu, was responsible for the failure of the process of development in Kelantan during its rule, resulting in Kelantan being one of the states left far behind in the various aspects compared to the other states.

"PAS leaders are certainly good in religious rituals...but in terms of administering the state they have no expertise. Is PAS capable of developing Kelantan?," he said.

In his one-hour speech of which 80 per cent was devoted to the criticism of PAS, the prime minister explained how PAS had caused Muslims in the country to be detracted, resorted to dirty tactics to instigate and instil anger of the people towards the Barisan Nasional and Umno, indiscriminately labelling Umno members as infidels and the reason for the disunity of the Muslims in the country.

Dr Mahathir also expressed regret that PAS was still inciting and disturbing students in local universities as well as local students in foreign universities and disrupting efforts of the federal government to produce more Malay professionals.

"We (the government) are trying to provide knowledge to our children but PAS distracts them with claims that these (knowledge obtained in universities) are all secular and the attracting the students to become the tools of PAS," he said.

He said that the actions by PAS had affected the students' concentration in acquiring knowledge and caused a large number of Malay students to fail to obtain good results to compete with non-Malay students.

Dr Mahathir was warmly greeted by some 5,000 residents including the Orang Asli during the visit, his first to Kelantan since the 1999 general election and the first to the district in 10 years.

In conjunction with the visit, the prime minister was presented with a mouse deer by the Gua Musang residents.

-- BERNAMA

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