

28 MAR 2001

Mahathir-PAS

DR M ASKS PAS FOLLOWERS TO OPEN EYES TO THEIR LEADERS' MISDEEDS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 28 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged PAS followers to open their eyes to the misdeeds PAS leaders committed for sheer pursuit of their political interests.

"PAS members, despite whatever wrong their leaders do, tend to accept their misdeeds as party strategy," he said.

A case in point Dr Mahathir said was the recent visit by PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat to Bukit Pelandok, a pig-farming area hit by an outbreak of the deadly Japanese Encephalitis (JE) disease a few years ago.

While Umno and MCA leaders went there then out of genuine desire to know the people's and pig-rearers' problems, PAS leaders were there only recently to show that they are close with the Chinese, Dr Mahathir said when addressing a-meet-the-people rally in Kampung Sungai Mulia here today.

The prime minister's address marked the national-level launch of the leaders-meet-people programme organised by the Federal Territory 3P group of listeners, viewers and readers, a new approach adopted by the Information Department to explain government policies to the masses.

Dr Mahathir said: "I hope the Chinese are not being hoodwinked. But as for PAS members, please open your eyes, watch the antics of their leaders who have digressed from the teachings of Islam."

That aside, he said PAS leaders came up with all sorts of excuses for not wanting to meet Umno to discuss Malay unity.

According to Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, if PAS was seen to be supporting the Malays, the Chinese would not lend them backing.

"They regard that Malay support is already in the pocket and if they can woo Chinese support, they can win the next general election," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir said in fact the four issues Umno wanted to discuss with PAS namely relating Malay special rights, Islam being the official religion, Malay being the national language and the position of the Malay Rulers do not contradict the issue of national unity which PAS insisted on being a topic for the talks.

"Why can't we still not see eye to eye on these matters. We consented to discussing national unity as demanded by PAS," Dr Mahathir said.

He criticised opposition parties for continuing to run down the government and hurling baseless accusations even with the general election already over.

Even in the democracies that the opposition idolised so much, political campaigning was only for the election season and would cease after that so as to let the elected government run the country, Dr Mahathir said.

"Instead here, we have opposition parties intensifying their campaigning through hundreds of rallies to perennially spread lies against the government. They incessantly ridicule of the government to split the electorate hoping to erode the size of government supporters," he said.

Dr Mahathir said despite Umno being abused and vilified, it was still willing to come together with PAS even though only on specific matters because being a lynchpin of the ruling Barisan Nasional Umno upholds the true teachings of Islam, which, among other things, put unity first.

The prime minister said the accusation that the government was inconsiderate towards the country's most famous convict was also not true

because the person concerned enjoyed the kind of treatment not accorded other prisoners.

Dr Mahathir also did not dismiss the notion that PAS would continue to capitalise on the picture of a black-eyed former national leader to fish for votes in the next general election.

"When that person was in the government PAS did not at all support him. This is all a political ploy," he said.

Dr Mahathir called on Malays and Muslims, irrespective of their political beliefs, to unite for their own common interests and at the same time strengthen goodwill with the other Malaysian communities to consolidate national unity.

The prime minister also urged Malaysians to reject street demonstrations organised by certain groups with hopes of unseating the government through such means as had happened in a few countries.

Following today's launch of the national-level programme, 14 such leaders-meet-people rallies will be held in the states starting next month and district-level ones will be held nation-wide after that.

These programmes were designed to heighten awareness on the importance of preserving unity and nurturing tolerance and the spirit of mutual help among multi-racial Malaysians.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was also present.

-- BERNAMA
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