

20/07/2002

Dr M: Malays must change their mindset

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Malay mindset willing to sacrifice the teachings of Islam and condone slander, vulgarity and immoral behaviour must be changed for the future of the community, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Expressing disappointment over such tendencies in the Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections, the Umno president said that it was sad to note that some Malays supported leaders who had no respect for Islam.

"It is very disappointing that they should support people who are obviously showing disrespect to Islam by going completely against the teachings of Islam... they curse, slander, show vulgar hand-signs and expose their private parts in public," Dr Mahathir said.

Speaking at a Press conference after delivering his keynote address at the Kuala Lumpur International Forum on Islam (Kalif 2002), he refuted suggestions that there were internal problems in the Barisan Nasional.

The BN's defeat for the Anak Bukit State seat and the slim victory for the Pendang parliamentary seat was not due to the choice of candidates, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Opposition supporters were so fanatical they might even elect a "tree stump" if it were a Pas candidate.

"If they rope in an Umno leader today and make him contest under their ticket tomorrow, he will surely win because these people (supporters) do not think at all ... all they know is to support the symbol of the moon."

Dr Mahathir said that Pas had hoodwinked the Malays into believing that the "Pas law" they had enacted was actually the Quranic hudud.

"It is not Islamic at all. When it is not just, it is not Islamic but they used the word hudud in order to justify.

"But they don't care about justice, so long as it is called hudud they will support. Like "Parti Islam"... it is called Islam but it is actually anything but Islam," he added.

To a question, the Prime Minister said he did not expect the Opposition to raise the ruckus they engineered in Anak Bukit and Pendang during the next general election as they would be dispersed all over the country.

"Last night they were literally their own policeman. They do not care about law and order.

"We hope we can oversee the (general election) so that it would be a fair election. Previously we did not have this kind of phenomenon but now they seem to think that by using strong-arm tactics, they can win."

On Pas' threat to contest the election results for the Pendang parliamentary seat in court, Dr Mahathir said that they were free to do anything as provided for under the law.

On BN's achievement, he said that the coalition had made progress but noted that Malays in the two areas were split.

"It is true that there is a split down in the middle but we have progressed ... it is not easy to convert people who refuse to think or evaluate but merely follow what (their leaders) tell them to do.

"Even (if) the leaders do all kind of wrong things, both from the Malay and Islamic point of view, it seems that these people just cannot do anything else but support (them)... that is why we have not been able to obtain better results, but I think we have made progress," Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said.

He noted that Umno members who deserted the party in 1997/99 were also

seen to have returned to party's fold.

"Not all have returned but we have obtained 3,000-odd additional votes this time and obviously some of these were our members before," he said.