

04/11/2002

Terengganu MB: It's a ploy to remove Opposition parties

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - One Opposition party feels that it is best ignored, another finds no sincerity in it, two others are studying the matter and a youth wing of another party has rejected it outright.

The issue - the open invitation by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Opposition parties to join the Barisan Nasional.

Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said today the invitation was an effort to remove the Opposition parties and undermine democracy.

He said the invitation also showed that BN had failed to strengthen the nation in facing external threats.

"BN also fails to unify its component parties and the problems in MCA have not been resolved.

"For Pas, unity is through Islam. That is why we propose a muzakarah," the Terengganu Menteri Besar said when met after presenting temporary occupation licence to participants under a group land programme in Kampung Paya in Kuala Terengganu.

In Kota Baru, Pas spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat felt there was no need for a discussion on the matter and he would be very angry with other party leaders if they wanted to discuss it.

The Kelantan Menteri Besar said the chances of Pas re-joining the BN was almost nil as the party was discouraged by its past experience in the coalition. He said Pas joined BN in the 1970s but was kicked out in a very humiliating fashion.

"I still feel the bitterness of Umno's action," he said today.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir issued an open invitation to Opposition parties to join BN, stressing the need for everyone to work together to face threats from external enemies.

The Prime Minister also called on all parties to reduce politicking and be united and focus on developing the country.

Parti Keadilan Nasional Youth chief Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, in rejecting the offer, described it as "a political ploy by a man who wants to redeem himself before retirement".

He said it was Dr Mahathir's wish to correct his mistakes, which led to the formation of Umno splinter parties like Keadilan and the now defunct Semangat 46, before he retires next year.

"By calling all parties to unite, Dr Mahathir will be seen as a magnanimous leader and a messenger of peace.

"This is what he wants before gutting politics despite being aware that Umno practises the politics of revenge," he said.

Elaborating on this, Saifuddin, who is Lunas assemblyman, said many former Semangat 46 members found themselves displaced although a few leaders had gained recognition.

"Keadilan members will be treated the same way and continue to become victims."

However, Keadilan vice-president Azmin Ali and DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said their parties needed time to study the matter before making a stand.

Kerk said DAP was likely to come out with a statement tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Parti Rakyat Malaysia said if Dr Mahathir was serious about wanting the people to unite against foreign threats, and to focus on the development of the country and people, then the best course of action for

him to take is to begin the process of forming a National Unity Government.

PRM president Dr Syed Husin Ali said the party suggested Dr Mahathir to invite formally all parties - registered or awaiting registration - non-governmental organisations and respected individuals in society to discuss the matter together.

"If Dr Mahathir is unwilling to do this, then a large section of the people will perceive that he is only indulging in political propaganda and deception."

Syed Husin said it appears that actually Dr Mahathir was worried about the impending PRM-Keadilan merger, as this would strengthen the opposition forces to mount an effective challenge against BN.