

17 SEP 2003

Parliament-Noh

PAS SLAMMED FOR QUESTIONING DR M'S SINCERE DECISION TO RETIRE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- PAS was today slammed for deliberately questioning Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's sincere decision to retire next month and for turning it into a political issue.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Noh Omar said through their ceramah, PAS was still questioning whether Dr Mahathir would indeed keep his pledge to step down.

"In their ceramah they say that they believe the Prime Minister will not retire at the end of this October. Why do they have this assumption...probably they want to impress upon the people that Dr Mahathir will not keep his pledge...that he is inconsistent and fickle," he said when speaking to reporters at Parliament House.

He said PAS had also questioned the credibility of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Dr Mahathir's successor as though trying to pit them against each other.

"Now it appears they are raising the Prime Minister sky high and belittling the abilities of his deputy. This is michievous politics of the opposition...whoever becomes the country's leader will become the victim of their attacks," he said.

Noh said as Abdullah had been named as Dr Mahathir's successor as Prime Minister, PAS was now attacking him like what happened to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim when he was a Cabinet Minister.

"But when they saw the political advantage from the sacking of (Anwar), they turned him into a champion and hero. This is the pattern of their politics, not politics that can correct a situation but politics of giving views that will instil hatred among the people," he said.

Earlier during Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat, Wan Nik Wan Yussof (PAS-Bachok) wanted to know how far it was true that the Prime Minister would be stepping down next month.

Noh said despite appeals from leaders of several countries and the international community that he revoke his decision to step down, Dr Mahathir was sticking to his decision to retire.

"His firm stand shows that he has confidence in his successor...that he will discharge his duties efficiently and well as Prime Minister," he said.

Replying to Zawawi Ahmad (PAS-Padang Terap), Noh said based on the Population and Housing Census 2000, Malaysia's population stood at 23,274,690, close to half being Malays.

Of the total, 11.7 million comprised Malays, 2.6 million other (Sabah and Sarawak) Bumiputeras, 5.7 million Chinese 1.7 million Indians and 269,000 comprised other communities.

Selangor was the most populated at 4.2 million, followed by Johor 2.7 million, Sabah 2.6 million, Perak and Sarawak 2.1 million each, Kedah 1.6 million, KL Federal Territory 1.4 million, Kelantan, Pahang and Penang 1.3 million each, Terengganu 899,000, Negeri Sembilan 860,000, Melaka 636,000, Perlis 204,000 and Labuan FT 36,000.

The census showed that Malaysia's population comprised 50.9 per cent males and 49.1 per cent females.

From the age aspect, 49 per cent of the population comprised young people aged between 15 and 44.

A total of 6.3 per cent comprised old folks -- aged 50 and above. The rest were children aged 14 and below.

"The census conducted every 10 years is important for the government to make strategic and development planning," Noh said.

-- BERNAMA

SNS MAI AAM