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Hadi praises Dr Mahathir for his refusal of IMF aid offer in 1997

KUALA TERENGGANU, Sat. - Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang has praised Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his foreign policies, saying he admired the Prime Minister for refusing aid from the International Monetary Fund.

"I admire him for this ...we did not need the IMF for our economic recovery. This is one action that I do agree with him," he said in an interview with the New Sunday Times and Berita Minggu at his office here.

(During the 1997-98 regional financial crisis, Dr Mahathir refused the IMF aid package that would have put Malaysia under the dictates of the world body).

Present at the interview were Pas vice-president Datuk Mustafa Ali and central committee member Subky Latiff.

Hadi, who is Terengganu Menteri Besar, was asked about his views on the Prime Minister's foreign policies.

Although he supported Dr Mahathir's foreign policies concerning the US, Hadi said he disagreed with him on the SAR (People's Religious Schools) and other domestic issues.

"Not everything that Dr Mahathir does is right. He makes mistakes too."

Hadi was also asked about his views on Iraq, Islam, Pas and Terengganu, as well as his opinion on Dr Mahathir and Prime Minister-in-waiting, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He expressed hope that Abdullah would continue "some of the things" that Dr Mahathir had done, in particular his strong foreign policies in connection with the US.

But he declined to make an assessment of Abdullah yet, saying that it was premature to do so.

Hadi was also asked about Pas and its resolve to establish an Islamic theocratic state.

He said Pas would do so at any cost because the establishment of Islamic theocracy was the foundation of the party's struggle.

He reflected on the history of Islam, saying that Prophet Muhammad had in fact established the first Islamic nation - Medina.

"This is the message of Islam."

Hadi was also confident that non-Muslims would not reject Pas if they understood that an Islamic government was fair to non-Muslims and could rule effectively.

On the Malay-Muslim support for the party, he expressed confidence that this would not waver.

He said that Pas had, since 1999, the overwhelming support of the Malays and Muslims unlike the Barisan Nasional, whose bulk of support was from the non-Malays and non-Muslims.

On its relations with the DAP, which left the opposition in November 2001 because it disagreed with Pas' plan to set up an Islamic State, Hadi said they would co-operate in the election to defeat the BN.

He said it could not be denied that Malays were at the core of national politics and it was their support that must be retained and won.