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Keng Yaik defends Dr M's 'Islamic state' declaration

IPOH, Sat. - Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik today defended former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to declare Malaysia an Islamic state more than two years ago.

He said the declaration came in the wake of Pas' growing extremist Islamic ideology and claims by the Opposition party that Malaysia was a secular country.

"Pas' political and ideological onslaught and its growing influence in the civil service had increased the pressure on Umno at that time and the party had to respond accordingly," he said after opening the annual general meeting of Gerakan's life-member council.

Dr Mahathir announced that Malaysia was an Islamic state on Sept 29, 2001 at the 33rd Gerakan National Delegates Conference held in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Lim said what Dr Mahathir did was well within the confines of the Federal Constitution.

He said the former Prime Minister had not acted unconstitutionally when he unilaterally announced the country's status.

"Dr Mahathir was the then Prime Minister and head of government, thus he had the power to announce Malaysia as an Islamic country."

Dr Lim refuted DAP's repeated claims that Malaysia was a secular state before Sept 29, 2001 because "Islam as the religion of the federation was enshrined in the Federal Constitution since 1957".

He said the non-Muslim rakyat should be wary of the DAP, especially party supremo Lim Kit Siang's cunning and opportunistic politics.

DAP, he said, was going all out to instil fear in the hearts and minds of the non-Muslims, especially Chinese voters.

"DAP is telling the Chinese voters that with Dr Mahathir's announcement, the Islamisation process will pick up speed and momentum.

"But I will tell (the rakyat) now that immediately after the announcement on Sept 29, Dr Mahathir assured BN leaders during a Cabinet meeting in October 2001 that there will be no further Islamisation of the country."

He said nothing had changed since the announcement and hoped that the Chinese voters would reject Kit Siang.