

**Political Islam: MCA chief raps Umno, PAS**  
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MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek took a dig at both Umno and PAS today for using religion to strengthen their influence over the Malays and to garner support from the community.

When the two dominant Malay-Muslim dominant parties compete, Chua said, the consequence would be the implementation of non-progressive policies, resulting in the country being 'trapped' in the middle-income category for more than 10 years.

"We notice Umno has become more conservative to compete with PAS in getting Malay support. We raise this issue so as to allow the Chinese community to ponder on this," he said at the 33rd Kedah MCA Annual Convention in Alor Star.

"Don't be optimistic that once PAS rules the government, the country will be free from corruption and other problems. Bear in mind that some of the most corrupt countries are Muslim-majority countries," he added.

NONESpeaking to about 300 members, Chua (right in photo) was accompanied by several MCA heavyweights - Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai, Transport Minister Kong Cho Ha, Tan Chai Ho, Chor Chee Heung, Donald Lim - and many Penang leaders like Lau Chiek Tuan and Tan Cheng Liang.

Chua said under PAS rule, the younger generation would not be bothered to learn about the adverse impacts that could hurt the country's social and economic development.

In his speech, he referred to Syed Akbar Ali's book 'Malaysia and the Club of Doom', in which the author listed down several common characteristics of the 57 Muslim countries in the world.

In world of their own

The characteristics include: less democracy because of the emphasis on religion; they have elections but also have councils of Muslim elders enjoying absolute power; practise of absolute monarchy; and formulating policies not on par with global development.

NONEThe emphasis of these countries was more on religion than on education, Chua said, adding that their illiteracy rates were very high, especially among women.

Basically, people in these countries also had low incomes, high unemployment rate and were racked by a lot of controversies based on the interpretation of law as their leaders were mostly fundamentalists.

"Although Malaysia is also a Muslim-majority country, we are luckier because of the moderate and pragmatic policies implemented by the BN government," he said.  
Cautionary tale

At a press conference held later, Chua stressed that he raised the issue of Muslim governance to remind Chinese Malaysians not to support PAS.

Chua is aware that, by bringing up the issue, a large segment of the Chinese community would accuse MCA of trying to undermine the community's growing support for PAS.

"So I am sharing information in the book that if a country does not have a socio-economic agenda, but only focus on developing one area (religion), the country will not achieve the success it hopes for," he added.

He said the author of the book, who is a lawyer, has shown in his writing that governments which do not emphasise on socio-economic development has failed to bring changes to the country.

"Only a few Muslim countries like Malaysia and Turkey, seem to have some success but these too are limited," he added.

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