

# PAS refutes Dr M's claim

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➤ > But damage has already been done, says analyst

**PETALING JAYA:** PAS has refuted a claim by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the Islamit party would refrain from cooperating with Umno in the Semenyih by-election, but the damage has already been done.

At a press conference in Kuala Terengganu yesterday, PAS elections director Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar described the prime minister's statement as "merely a psy-war".

A video of the press conference has been uploaded on his Facebook page.

However, political scientist Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian said the prime minister's statement - true or distorted - had already raised suspicions within Umno and PAS.

Ahmad Samsuri, who is Terengganu menteri besar, also rebutted a claim that PAS had signed an agreement not to support Umno.

He clarified that the only deal it signed was a letter of support to allow Mahathir to strengthen Islam and to address the plight of the underprivileged Malays.

He said the agreement on the Islamic agenda had nothing to do with the by-election. "It's the same kind of cooperation we have given before. (For instance) we also supported the prime minister's decision not to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination."

His comments came in the wake of a photograph of PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang offering a handshake to Mahathir that has gone viral. The photograph was taken at a meeting between the two leaders recently.

Mahathir said on Saturday that when he met the PAS leaders on Friday, they made it known that PAS would not support Umno in Semenyih because the Pakatan Harapan candidate was not from DAP, but they would

not openly declare their stand.

Apart from Hadi and Ahmad Samsuri, PAS secretary-general Datuk Takiyuddin Hassan was also present as a representative of Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yackop.

According to Mahathir, the PAS leaders said they would not support Umno but they did not say whether they would support PH. "They also said they would not be present on nomination day but they went anyway," he added.

He said the PAS leaders even handed in a letter signed by Takiyuddin declaring their stand.

It is learnt the meeting was held to discuss administrative matters such as oil royalty payments to Kelantan and Terengganu.

Mahathir said the PAS leaders also declared support for him as prime minister "but as we know, they don't often support me".

"The meeting was more focused on the coordination of work between the federal and state governments. They wanted PAS representatives in certain government agencies and we also asked for PH leaders to be given places in the state governments where we don't have a representative."

Sivamurugan said Mahathir, who is also Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) chairman, had successfully made a strategic move and some people would believe him.

About 70% of the electorate in Semenyih are Malays.

PPBM is fielding 30-year-old Muhammad Aiman Zailani. He is treasurer of the party's Hulu Langat division.

He is up against Zakaria Hanafi from Barisan Nasional, Nik Aziz Afiq Abdul from PSM and Kuan Chee Heng, an independent candidate.