

Mat Sabu hits back, claims Umno near collapse
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — PAS is close to declaring itself victors in its contest with Umno for the Malay rural vote during Hari Raya, with its deputy president Mohamad Sabu confidently saying that “Umno is going to collapse very soon”.

The vocal leader, who has been battling criticisms for his Bukit Kepong tragedy remarks, insisted to The Malaysian Insider yesterday that the party’s Hari Raya campaign blitz had been successful in garnering more Malay support for the federal opposition.

“Our ceramahs in the suraus and the mosques have been great. Very good response from the people,” he said.

Both Pakatan Rakyat (PR) and Barisan Nasional (BN) embarked on separate pre-polls Hari Raya campaigns during the month of Ramadan, with each trumpeting their respective agendas and messages to the Malay electorate, particularly in the Malay heartlands outside the capital.

But PAS came under fire on Saturday when Utusan Malaysia quoted Mohamad as saying that the communists who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station in 1950 during the pre-Independence insurgency were heroes.

The Umno-owned newspaper accused him of disparaging the country’s armed forces and expressing support for communists but Mohamad, popularly known as Mat Sabu, has since denied the report and accused the Malay-language daily of fabricating the quote.

The incident resulted in BN lawmakers going on the offensive after months of scrambling to control the fallout from rising inflation and the July 9 Bersih rally, hoping that Mohamad’s remarks would help Umno plant seeds of doubt among the Malay electorate, for whom communism remains a bogeyman especially in the rural heartland.

Despite this, Mohamad has remained confident, choosing instead to scoff at Umno’s attacks against him and saying it was clear that the Malay party was feeling pressured and “desperate”.

“You see, I am just a very, very small person. Not a big person... but yet, they attack me... five days and five nights. They are clearly desperate,” he said.

He said during PAS’s Hari Raya campaign, party leaders have been explaining to voters Bersih 2.0’s key demands for electoral reforms, the controversies surrounding postal ballots and discrepancies found in the present electoral roll.

“Other issues include corruption, the RM24 million diamond ring scandal by the prime minister’s wife... they have not properly explained that yet,” he said.

Reaction from the public has been warming, said Mohamad, indicating a likelihood that PAS has managed to drive home its point.

"Whatever it is, Umno is going to collapse very soon. You will see," he said confidently.

During the entire Hari Raya festivities, PAS members aired Bersih videos and distributed some 200,000 DVDs on the tumultuous July 9 rally in their respective villages, hoping to counter police claims that no violence had been used against protestors.

The move was part of the Islamist party's "balik kampung" programme, which ran throughout the Ramadan fasting month up until Hari Raya Aidilfitri, and was aimed at helping PAS garner more support ahead of the coming general election.

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