

DAP says shares stand on Islam with first three PMs
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 9 — DAP said today its position is that Malaysia is a secular state with Islam the official religion and that this is consistent with the views of the country's first three leaders, as it came under a series of attacks from Umno-aligned religious scholars who have said it is haram for Muslims to back the opposition party because it is against an Islamic state.

The party's parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang also pointed out what he called the hypocrisy of the attacks as Umno's fellow Barisan Nasional (BN) partner MCA had been attacking the DAP for being a pawn of PAS and opening the door to the eventual implementation of Islamic law.

Earlier today the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leadership also jointly slammed Utusan Malaysia for stoking "religious conflict" after the Umno-owned paper ran a controversial report on its front page yesterday titled "Haram sokong DAP" (Forbidden to support DAP).

"The DAP stand that Malaysia is a secular state with Islam as official religion is no different from that of first three Prime Ministers – Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak and Tun Hussein," Lim (picture) said in a statement today.

Utusan Malaysia has been spearheading reports to suggest DAP was anti-Malay and anti-Islam while the MCA has been slamming its main rival for Chinese votes as a party bent on selling out the interests of non-Muslims to benefit PAS and its aspirations to eventually set up an Islamic state.

In what is becoming an increasingly contentious campaign for votes ahead of elections expected soon, Islam has become a focal point of the tussle for support.

The PR coalition has been put on the backfoot in recent months with its leaders being constantly forced to explain its stand on Islam amid a barrage of attacks from Barisan Nasional (BN) parties.

PAS leaders have said that while an Islamic state remains one of the stated aims of the party it has not been added into the common agenda of PR as the coalition seeks to find a consensus in its bid to take federal power.

"Although Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak proclaimed 1Malaysia as his signature policy to create a nation where every Malaysian would regard himself or herself as Malaysian first and race, religion, region and class second, UMNO and Barisan Nasional leaders have tried their worst to divide Malaysians along race and religious lines.

"MCA for instance had pulled out all stops to panic Malaysian Chinese to reject the DAP on the ground that the DAP is only a pawn of PAS, while UMNO had gone all out to urge Malay voters to reject PAS and PKR because both are stooges of DAP," said Lim today.

The Pahang Mufti has also backed the growing campaign among Umno-aligned religious leaders, declaring it "haram" (forbidden) for Muslims to support the DAP after several Islamic scholars called the secular party "kafir harbi" or belligerent infidels, distinguishing it

from the MCA or MIC as parties that have accepted the faith's supremacy in multireligious Malaysia.

The Mufti, Datuk Abdul Rahman Osman, was reported by Utusan as saying it is "haram" and a sin for Muslims to support a party that has openly stated it is opposed to an Islamic state and the enforcement of hudud that provides for harsh penalties for crimes such as the amputation of hands for theft.

Yesterday, an Islamic religious scholar, Abdullah Sa'amah, declared it "haram" for Muslims to support the DAP, according to a front-page report in Utusan.

But the founder of the Pondok Geting religious school in Tumpat, Kelantan said it was acceptable for Muslims to support Umno's political partners, the MCA and MIC, because they recognised Islam's pre-eminence.

"Is Utusan Malaysia, the UMNO newspaper, now suggesting that the first three Prime Ministers of Malaysia were enemies of Islam to the extent that the term "kafir harbi" could be used in its seditious campaign to falsely paint DAP as anti-Islam?"

"Here let me remind the UMNO leaders and Utusan editors what the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in Cairo last year: "To Egyptians who view secularism as removing religion from the state, or as an infidel state, I say you are mistaken...It means respect to all religions."

The religion's right-wing faction, including within Umno, the ruling BN's main party, has made its presence more pronounced in recent years with several Umno politicians in its Johor stronghold proposing hudud be enforced in the southern state.

To date, only Kelantan and Terengganu had passed hudud as laws but have not been enforced as they run counter to the Federal Constitution.

A recent survey by independent pollster Merdeka Center has shown that Malay voters' satisfaction with BN dropped from 65 per cent in May to 58 per cent in June.

The approval ratings for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is also BN president, among the Malay community had dipped from 79 per cent to 75 per cent in the same period.

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