

Hadi rebuts Dr M, blames Umno for confusing religious community
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 — PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang today blamed Umno for confusing Malaysia's multireligious populace even as Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad accused the Islamist party of using the "Allah" dispute as Election 2013 vote bait.

"This religious issue had been played up by Umno since before.

"In fact they even played up the word 'Allah' and twisted the decision made by the Syura Council a month ago," Abdul Hadi **(picture)** said in his speech at a PAS rally in Ampang today.

Dr Mahathir rebuked PAS in his Sunday column in Malay broadsheet *Mingguan Malaysia* today, accusing the party of using religion for secular gain, and warned that the cleft within Muslim Malaysians who follow the Sunni school of Islam may lead to a bigger interracial catastrophe if the non-Muslim minority were to be dragged in.

"The word 'Allah' is not just for Muslims only, in fact in Arab countries religious adherents apart from Islam also use the holy word.

"Only what is not allowed is to translate it as a reference for other gods and misused for purposes that are not good," Hadi said.

The dispute over the use of the Arabic word "Allah" for god erupted four years ago, shortly after Election 2008, and continues to rage in the run-up to the 13th general elections, which must be called by April when the Barisan Nasional (BN) federal government's mandate expires.

In Malaysia, the Malays, who formed 60 per cent of the 28 million population, are constitutionally defined to also be Muslims, which is why race and religion are treated as inseparable issues in the country.

The Muslim community has argued that the use of the word "Allah" should be exclusive to them on the grounds that Islam is monotheistic and the word denotes the Muslim's god.

PAS' powerful syura council, which advises the Islamist party on religious matters, decided last month that "Allah" is a universal word and can be spoken by those who are not Muslims.

In its January 13 decision following weeks of political debate, PAS religious advisory council clarified that non-Muslims should prevent the use of the word "Allah" in translations of their religious texts, but are free to use it orally.

The council explained that the word "Allah" is a specific and holy word used to refer to the Muslims' god.

Hadi blamed Umno for politicising "Allah", saying the Barisan National (BN) coalition's largest party was using the issue to fish for votes.

He said the ruling party had been doing so from long ago and as a result, Muslims in Malaysia had become confused over its usage.

The Marang MP assured the PAS grassroots who turned up for the meeting with senior leaders that the party was steadfast and would not compromise its stand against forming a unity government with Umno, saying it had learnt its lesson from being fooled in the past.

He urged party members to learn from the past as well.

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