

Aziz Bari: Malays not stupid, won't fall for religious political games

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The rise of Malay extremism and Umno's new religious image are not good for Islam, says legal expert Aziz Bari from DAP.

PETALING JAYA: The new form of politics that uses the religious card is making Malays appear stupid and spiritually weak, says the DAP's Abdul Aziz Bari.

But this may backfire against the players, as the majority of Malays are anything but stupid, the legal and constitutional expert said in a talk aired live on DAP's Facebook page last night.

He was addressing claims by some quarters working to paint a "false" image of the DAP as a party which is attempting to "Christianise Malaysia".

"DAP doesn't only have Christian members. There are those from other religions in the party as well. So it's not a party that is committed to Christianity.

"But, of course, there are those who pin-point certain events, like Hannah Yeoh's book, to make their case.

"But she was just speaking of her personal experience. Like what Mujahid said, he has read the book and he's still a Muslim," said Aziz, in reference to Amanah vice-president Mujahid Yusof Rawa.

Yeoh has had a police report lodged against her by Universiti Utara Malaysia lecturer Kamarul Zaman Yusoff, who claimed that her autobiography contained "too many" parables and excerpts from the Bible.

Kamarul had said that the book titled "Becoming Hannah: A Personal Journey by Hannah Yeoh" was an attempt to proselytise the Muslims and should only be sold in Christian bookshops.

Yeoh, however, has stood by what she wrote, saying that she was just relaying her personal journey.

"It's like they are trying to portray the Malays as being stupid and spiritually weak. But that's not true. So they ended up giving more publicity to her (Yeoh) book," said Aziz.

He also said claims of the DAP being an anti-Islam party which is trying to take away Islam's position as the religion of the federation were created after the Barisan Nasional (BN) lost its grip on several states after the 12th general election in 2008.

"They want to instil fear in the Malays.

"But this (DAP wanting to Christianise Malaysia) is not even possible when the party is still the minority, and (the goal) would require changes to the laws which must be consented to by the Council of Rulers first.

"So this claim is false and impossible."

Using religion to gain public support isn't good for the country and for Islam itself, said Aziz.

He added that while religious issues might be popular, it did not mean that it would have any effect on the polls.

He questioned Umno's "sudden" interest in religion and pointed out that back in the 1970s and the 1980s, the ruling Malay party had claimed it was a "pragmatic" outfit.

"The Malays are concerned over religious issues but I'm not certain that will determine the way they vote.

"And I think the Malays, with their education level, can differentiate between religion which is a personal matter and politics that decides public policies.

"But using religion, like Umno is doing, isn't good for the country or for Islam."

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