

Mahathir: Opposition out to discredit Barisan

Beware the dirty tactics

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. —
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mo-
hammad warned members of
the Barisan Nasional (BN)
today that the Opposition is
using "dirty tactics" to gain
support.

He reminded the members not to fall prey to these tactics, saying the Opposition was resorting to them because it had no real issues to exploit.

"We must always be wary of letters and pamphlets circulated by the Opposition during an election period as they are only for their political gain."

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and BN chairman, was addressing delegates at the joint

opening of the annual meetings of the Batu, Lembah Pantai and Seputeh Umno Divisions at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He said Umno's enemies would go to any extent, including making unsubstantiated allegations against the party's leaders, to gain the people's support.

An Opposition party has even indulged in character assassination by circulating photographs showing him dining with those involved in the Bumiputra-Malaysia Finance (BMF) loan scandal, including its former chairman, Lorrain Esme Osman.

This photograph was in fact taken about seven or eight years ago when he led an investment mission to Hong Kong.

"The motive for circulating the photographs is clearly to imply that I am

also involved in the BMF scandal."

He said that at a time like this when there was much talk about a general election, it was likely that many such photographs would be circulated by the Opposition in its bid to discredit Umno and its leaders.

He regretted that there were some who had been taken in by such unfounded charges.

There have been occasions when some members asked him why the Government was not acting against those accused of being corrupt.

The Prime Minister said it was not easy to take action based on mere accusations. The Government needed to have sufficient proof.

Many have also asked the Government why it had not taken action in the BMF scandal.

Dr Mahathir said that since it took place in Hong Kong, it was subjected to the laws of the British colony and he understood that the trial might take as long as five years.

He also regretted that there were some Malays who were willing to criticise their own country in foreign magazines just for the sake of earning praise from foreigners.

Dr Mahathir also cautioned the BN against over-confidence, saying it could lead to the coalition's downfall.

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PM slams Malays who are out to earn praise only

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He said complacency triggered by over-confidence and campaigns by the Opposition to belittle the BN leadership could prove detrimental to all, including Umno.

"It (a defeat) can happen if we lose our sense of direction, become arrogant and disregard party rules and discipline."

If the BN loses in the next general election, the chances of it winning future polls would be slim indeed.

"Once we are defeated, we cannot expect to win again. We might then

have to remain an Opposition for a long time."

The Prime Minister said in the event of a defeat, the Malays would lose their political power.

He stressed that they needed this power at least until they had become economically strong.

Dr Mahathir called on Umno members to understand that in allocating seats, the leadership could not give all the predominantly Malay constituencies to Umno because the overall victory of the coalition was more important than winning one or two seats.