

Mahathir: Time to sink our political differences

STAR 18 AUG 1986

ALOR STAR, Sun. — Victory or defeat in the election should not be a barrier to national unity and harmony, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the people, especially the Malays, should not let their emotions stand in the way of national unity.

"We must sink all our differences now and unite although a lot of harsh words were exchanged at ceramahs," he told a gathering in Kampung Paya Kerchut here yesterday.

The Prime Minister said ill-feelings among the people would not benefit anyone.

"There is no reason in being proud if you have won. Those who lost should not be angry. We must unite now. We are not enemies," he added.

He hoped all Muslims would sink their political differences and unite in the spirit of Hari Raya Haji and Muslim brotherhood.

Dr Mahathir regretted that certain quarters had abused Islam and Allah's name, by claiming that their party was Allah's. "Therefore when they lost, it would imply that Allah had lost as well," he added.

"Allah cannot lose. It is only we humans who compete and lose," he added.

Dr Mahathir urged religious scholars to teach the people the true essence of the Quran to check false teachings, which threatened the unity of the Muslims and the nation's multiracial society.

"We must fight the false interpretations and make the people realise that Islam preaches unity and condemns ill-feelings among Muslim brothers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said today that PAS failed at the recent election because of its mistake of aspiring to become the ruling party.

He said if PAS had aimed at becoming a strong Opposition, it might have had a better chance of capturing more seats in Parliament instead of the sole seat it won.

He told *Bernama* at the Kepala Batas airport before returning to Kuala Lumpur that the people had become confused and doubted PAS could come into power.

"As a result, the people decided to give Barisan Nasional a bigger mandate," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said the DAP on the other hand succeeded in increasing its representation in Parliament and State Assemblies on its theme as the Opposition.

He also said the Opposition could play a vital role in the country but the DAP had been opposing all government policies despite their obvious benefits.

"This is the difference between the Opposition in this country and those in other nations," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it was up to the DAP, which won 24 parliamentary seats, to determine how it would play its role as a constructive Opposition.