

# Dr M: Only Barisan can provide a strong govt

THE no-holds-barred campaign for votes in the coming general election entered its fourth day yesterday with Barisan Nasional leaders reminding the people why it is important for Malaysia to have a strong, efficient and responsible government.

Spearheaded by an indefatigable Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has been crisscrossing the country, the Barisan leadership cited its record of development achievements, religious tolerance and racial harmony as reasons for the people to return the party.

Voters were also reminded why they should give the incumbent government the two-third majority it is asking for.

On the campaign trail, the foul weather has not deterred workers from escalating the poster war and replacing posters blown away in the rain.

In a 15-minute ceramah over RTM yesterday, Dr Mahathir, Barisan chairman and Prime Minister, said Malaysia needs a strong, efficient and responsible government, one that only the Barisan Nasional is capable of providing at this time.

"For a developing country that comprises various races and religions such as Malaysia, only a strong government can run the country properly, sincerely and with confidence.

"The BN leaders have the integrity and the willingness to lead the country towards greater stability and progress," Dr Mahathir said.

He said since Malaysia attained independence 29 years ago, Malaysia's achievements under the Alliance and later the Barisan Nasional are obvious in all fields.

He said national development has been planned with great care, and the six five-year development plans undertaken so far have brought untold benefits in education, health, agriculture, basic amenities and industries, among others.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, spoke of the Barisan's efforts for a clean, efficient and trustworthy administration where whatever shortcomings that exist are pinpointed and rectified.

implementation of among other measures the clock-in system, the open office concept, the wearing of name tags, the one-stop payment centres and the injection of universal values in the civil service. The long-term benefits of these measures have been borne out, he added.

On the economy, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysia Inc and the privatization policies are meant to get the participation of the private sector in helping the Government increase its revenue and at the same time lessen its financial burden, boost productivity and promote greater economic growth.

He said the Government also feels that industry should provide the impetus for future national development.

Although the Government has given more attention to heavy industries which require large capital outlay, high technology and skilled workers, the development of villages and the rural areas remain a concern that will not be neglected, he added.

In this regard the Government encourages modern management systems for smallholdings and padi cultivation, and promotes cottage industries and restructuring of villages.

Residents of new villages, estates and rural areas are being

provided with various facilities for a better life, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is increasingly earning international respect not only for its firm stand on various issues but also for its contribution of ideas and experience in dealing with certain problems, including drug abuse.

At Sekolah Menengah Seri Kurau near Bagan Serai, Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba hit out at PAS leaders for collecting money from the poor purportedly for  *Jihad*  purposes.

PAS leaders claim that the people are living in poverty and yet are going round collecting donations from villagers, he said.

Encik Ghafar was opening the annual general meeting of the Kerian branch of the Perak Ketua Kampung Association.

Describing PAS' act as a form of exploitation of the villagers, he said the party seems to be keen in bringing up no issues other than those on Islam and  *kafir*  (infidels) which will only cause confusion among the people.

Encik Ghafar hopes the village heads would be an effective link between the Government and the people and help in efforts to develop the country.

In Pekan Merbuk, 20 km from Sungai Petani, Umno Youth leader Anwar Ibrahim

said PAS leaders in their election campaigns have deviated from the true teachings of Islam.

He said they are using politics as a means of fulfilling their personal interests. Such an attitude if left unchecked can weaken the Islamic brotherhood and hinder the Government in propagating Islam, he said at a ceramah organised by the Merbuk Umno division.

Encik Anwar, who is Education Minister, said PAS, while claiming that it is carrying out an Islamic struggle, has failed to provide clear explanations on many matters, including the question of usage of funds it collected from the people.

This, he said, is proof that PAS leaders have neglected their responsibilities and do not fully abide by the teachings of the Quran.

Encik Anwar said the Government has provided the people with various basic amenities but there are some who are not thankful for these benefits. Only those who hold fast to religion can appreciate such benefits in national development, he added.

Encik Anwar said the Government is prepared to listen to honest opinions on how to upgrade religious activities in the country. However, he regrets that opposition parties have distorted the efforts of the Government.

This tradition of championing the people would become further entrenched if the Barisan wins the general election, he said. This tradition had forced the Barisan government in the past to take certain lines of action that were not popular if seen from the short-term point of view but which would ultimately bring great benefits to the nation, he added.

"The courage to do this augurs well for the long-term development of the country. Otherwise, it will merely mean politics of popularity," Dr Mahathir said.

He said this emphasis on the long-term has resulted in the