

- Leaders agree on joint campaign
- Ghafar to head manifesto committee

BN activates

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polls panels

By Nor Hawa Yunus

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The Barisan Nasional, as part of its preparation for the general election, has activated two committees — the Barisan Nasional committee and the manifesto committee.

Unlike previous general elections, members of the Barisan Nasional committee will jointly campaign among the Malays, Chinese, Indians and voters from other communities in the coming election.

The committee will be active in State and parliamentary constituencies.

The manifesto committee, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba, who is also the Barisan Nasional secretary-general, would comprise representatives of component parties.

This was decided during a two-hour meeting of the leaders of the Barisan Nasional component parties at the Putra World Trade Centre here, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister told a Press conference after the meeting that today's gathering was not a Barisan Nasional supreme council meeting. It was a meeting of leaders of the component parties aimed at finding a consensus so that closer co-operation could be forged when the general election was held.

Dr Mahathir said the leaders took the opportunity to reflect on the history of the Barisan Nasional from the time the Alliance was formed in 1952.

"We agreed that the success of the country and the political stability it enjoyed since independence was the result of the close co-operation among component parties.

"Although the component parties may represent different races, because we are willing to work together we are able to consider each other's interest. This has helped to ensure co-operation.

"It is this co-operation that led to the country's stability and progress since independence."

Dr Mahathir said the leaders agreed that the

Barisan Nasional concept must be maintained because only the Barisan Nasional could guarantee stability and development.

The meeting welcomed the close co-operation among the component parties, in particular between the MCA and Gerakan in Penang.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting felt that there were not many issues that the opposition parties could use, noting that if there were indeed any, they would be inventions by the Opposition.

Pre-empting the reporters' question on the general election, Dr Mahathir said: "All this will be construed by the Press as indicating that the election is not too far away. Relatively speaking, October 1991 is not that far away."

On the allocation of seats, Dr Mahathir said the ratio among the component parties would remain although there could be some swapping of seats based on mutual understanding.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said all Barisan Nasional component parties were prepared to face the general election.

Dr Mahathir said the theme of the manifesto had yet to be decided, to which Encik Ghafar

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quipped: "It cannot be revealed too early ... lest Semangat 46 use it, then it will be difficult for us" to the laughter of the party leaders present at the Press conference.

Asked whether the Barisan Nasional would direct its machinery at any one State, Dr Mahathir said attention would be given to all States because the Barisan Nasional wanted victory in all of them.

Asked whether he had advised component parties to reduce internal politicking because some would be holding their respective party elections this year, Dr Mahathir said he did not give such advice.

"I believe all component parties place priority on securing a Barisan Nasional victory in the general election than victory for whoever is in the party."

On whether Usno and PBS would use their own symbols during the general election, Dr Mahathir said this matter had to be studied before a decision could be reached.