

PM on why BN needs only

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one manifesto

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Barisan Nasional, whose leaders are moderates, is responsible for bringing progress and prosperity to the nation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said he was certain that the people would understand the need for peace and stability in the country to be able to achieve progress.

He was speaking to reporters after unveiling the BN manifesto at the Umno headquarters.

The BN released only one manifesto with a common stand and objective.

"There is no confusion in our objectives unlike others who have come out with different manifestos carrying different messages," he said.

"Although the BN manifesto is printed in the nation's four main languages and also in Jawi, the message and meaning are the same."

On democracy, Dr Mahathir said elections in the country were fair and free. "Opposition parties are not only free to contest in elections but had also won seats."

He cited Kelantan and Terengganu as examples where opposition candidates had won seats in past elections.

Dr Mahathir said the PBS and Gerakan had, before they joined the BN, formed State Governments in Sabah and Penang respectively.

"This shows our commitment to democracy."

He said people were also free to criticise the Government as evident in the many allegations hurled at it.

He said the media were also free to either support or criticise the Government.

While there were publications which supported the Government, there were others which "condemned the Government from the first page to the last", he said.

He added that there were also magazines published by pressure groups which were critical of the Government.

On independent judiciary, Dr Mahathir said the courts had made decisions in favour of those who went against the Government.

He said the economy was doing well and the Government had been able to repay its loans as scheduled.

"I think we are the only Government in the world which is able to do so."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had to be cautious in the management of the country's finances because "a certain individual who had held the Finance Minister's post had incurred a lot of debts".

On education, he said that although Bahasa Malaysia was the medium of instruction, Chinese and Tamil primary schools would continue to exist.