

PM: VOTE FOR PEACE

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Barisan Nasional has unveiled its general election manifesto which emphasises on its commitment to strive for the well-being of all communities.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the manifesto, with the theme *Towards a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Malaysia*, was aimed at reminding the people that the progress achieved did not come on its own.

"It came through the efforts of the Barisan, led by moderate leaders. They have succeeded in creating a peaceful, stable and prosperous nation," the Prime Minister and Barisan chairman said when launching the manifesto at Umno headquarters today.

Also present were Umno deputy president Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan believed that consultations and discussions, irrespective of issues, had led to the present situation.

The Barisan component parties, he said, shared a common manifesto to ensure uniformity in the objectives to be achieved when the coalition formed the next government after the elections.

"Although the manifesto is issued in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese and Tamil, the content is the same. This shows that the Barisan parties do not have different stands for different communities," he said.

Even if the Barisan manifesto was issued "in the Eskimo language" the content would still remain the same, he added in jest.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan would always uphold the principle of democracy, adding that this had been proven through previous elections where the opposition was never prevented from forming state governments.

He cited Gerakan and PBS as examples when they were in the opposition and won to form the Penang and Sabah governments respectively.

The media was also free, he said: "Newspapers published by opposition parties which criticise the Government from page to page are allowed to exist. Even the pressure groups have their publications."

The Government, he added, also did not restrict foreign publications from circulating in the country.

On the economy, he said Malaysia had performed well and could even pre-pay its loans which other developing countries could not emulate.

Dr Mahathir also explained the contents of the manifesto, which covered political, democratic, economic progress, employment opportunities, religious freedom, national unity and integration, administration and foreign affairs.

The manifesto, published in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese, Tamil and Jawi, begins with a paragraph stressing that Malaysia is one of the peaceful, stable and prosperous countries in the world despite its multiracial and multi-religious population.

It says that Malaysians tend to take many things they have been enjoying for granted, including the better living standards and Malaysia's fifth position among the 135 developing countries.

Such progress, it says, did not happen "by accident" but came about through the stability and peace achieved by the Barisan which the people have voted continuously for 33 years.

The 20-page manifesto has a blue cover with colour photographs and graphs detailing the progress achieved by the nation through the Barisan.