

Dr M: Components will help each other to

BN's time-tested

ensure two-thirds majority

formula

By S. Jayakrishnan and Alex Choong

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Barisan Nasional component parties would continue with their time-tested formula of helping each other in order to retain the two-thirds majority in the general election.

The Prime Minister said this arrangement had worked and served the BN well. This formula has been so successful that it has helped the coalition to get two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat and in the State Assemblies in previous general elections.

This trade-off had worked very well, Dr Mahathir emphasised, adding that a coalition like the BN was a permanent feature and not one of convenience, such as that seen when some parties got together to form a coalition just because they were facing the polls.

The Prime Minister said this in his speech at the MIC convention attended by about 3,000 divisional leaders, branch chairmen, youth and wanita leaders at the Putra World Trade Centre. The convention carries the theme "MIC — A new direction".

Under the formula, it was usual for BN component parties to "sacrifice" seats for each other, Dr Mahathir said. For instance, parties like Umno, MCA and Gerakan were prepared to "sacrifice" seats in certain constituencies to other members of the BN such as the MIC.

This happens when the constituencies may not have many MIC members and that Indians may not be the majority in the racial breakdown of those areas.

Besides sacrificing these seats, members and supporters of the BN components would work very hard to ensure that the candidates win in the election.

Dr Mahathir, who is the BN chairman, said that it was not having a majority of

voters of one particular racial group that was important but the support of other races which was more important.

He said: "So we have a situation of *quid pro quo* — you scratch my back, I scratch yours."

He then reminded MIC members and supporters to work hard for the BN candidates, whether they were from from Umno, MCA or Gerakan, as if they were MIC candidates.

Dr Mahathir said: "The same principle should be applied to all BN component parties to ensure success for the coalition candidates."

Dr Mahathir drew the convention participants' attention to the 1990 general election when a disappointed former Umno leader teamed up with the DAP in forming the Gagasan Rakyat on one hand and with Pas on the other hand to form Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU).

He said there was no sincerity on the part of that leader.

The Prime Minister said: "We in the BN are not selfish. That is why after the general election, there is a place for members of the different political parties to participate in the Government."

Dr Mahathir also spoke of the unique concept of the coalition under the Alliance in the early years of the country's independence.

The Prime Minister reiterated that in the coalition, the various parties could discuss and settle any problem in a proper manner. There was no necessity to have demonstrations or for the people to take to the streets, as seen in some other countries.

The Prime Minister said: "The BN policy and system is to allow the various races and different communal parties to work together in a meaningful manner."

"We take note of the problems of the various communities and extend the neces-

sary help to them."

He said it was important that the BN concept be supported by all the component parties as it would allow for successful administration by the Government.

The Prime Minister also spoke of other coalition Governments in other countries which were set up after an election.

But this only happened when no single party had a "straight majority" to form the Government.

Because of this, they were

forced to form a coalition, which was not permanent in nature.

But the BN coalition Government was permanent, whether there was an election or not, Dr Mahathir said.

"Even in an election, the coalition partners contest under one party," he added.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the importance of maintaining political stability to ensure peace and continued economic growth.

He said the country en-

joyed an average of 8.4 per cent growth in the past seven years and at times even exceeded nine per cent.

"Malaysia has set a record that has never been established by any other developing country in the world," he said to applause from the audience.

Dr Mahathir said part of this was due to the political maturity and the ideological pragmatism of the BN and the political calm.

There must be correct ingredients for a country to

grow — the combination of sound policies and principles backed by an efficient and trustworthy administration.

The Prime Minister said the country had the proper approaches to achieve this. Equally important in this strategy is to maintain inflation at a low level.

"There is no economic growth and prosperity in the country if we cannot enjoy the kind of life we are enjoying now," Dr Mahathir said, adding that the Gov-

ernment would like to see workers' income increase together with that of productivity.

"This is a mission for all BN component parties to achieve," he said.

Towards this end, the Prime Minister said the BN needs the two-thirds majority. "We need a strong Government so that we can implement policies that would bring greater prosperity to all and be respected by the

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Manifesto to cover the whole spectrum

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rest of the world."

Later, speaking to newsmen, Dr Mahathir was asked whether a two-thirds majority for the BN was possible in the coming election.

Dr Mahathir said: "I believe we can get the two-thirds majority ... *Insyallah* (God willing), we will get it."

Asked whether he could shed some light on the BN manifesto, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, it covers the whole spectrum, that is, what has been done in the past and what the BN wants to do in the future.

"We can show very clearly that we are capable of doing it.

"It has not been easy for

us to steer the country both politically and economically over such a long period of time.

"Most countries, even developed countries, cannot sustain the growth which we have.

"We have proven that we can sustain (our efforts and growth). We have enough experience...."

Asked if the BN was will-

ing to share power, Dr Mahathir said: "We are not greedy. If we need to share power we will share power."

Asked whether that would include the possibility of sharing power with Pas, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, if necessary... it will not be the first time. But if possible, we should try to avoid this..."