

PM: There can be no room for complacency in an election

QUESTION: Would the manifesto in other languages be distributed in the next couple of days?

Dr Mahathir: It will be distributed in the next couple of days, even in Tamil and in Kadazan.

Q: Can you compare this manifesto with the previous manifesto?

Dr M: This provides continuity... as you know I am not trying to be over-ambitious. We just follow-up on the previous manifesto. This time we have listed the various areas. It is all very moderate.

Q: When drafting the manifesto, did you take into consideration the manifestos of other parties?

Dr M: We did not know what theirs were when we were doing ours. When we were ready with ours, they released their manifestos. We have not made any changes. What we know is that they do not have any basis at all. They want to abolish this, abolish that. They promise the sky, the stars, everything but they find it difficult to give even a little.

Q: After this, when will you be announcing the Barisan Nasional list of candidates?

Dr M: I will send the names to the Barisan Nasional component party leaders, Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers. For the non-Umno Chief Ministers, I will only give *tauliah* (accreditation). They will fill in the names, names that they choose. I don't interfere. I have done the list for Umno and will send it to the Menteri Besar. For Kelantan I have the list because there is no BN MB in Kelantan.

Certainly, in the list, there are people who will remain and those dropped. I believe that those who remain will get the support from all sides and those who are dropped will give their support because they realise that in the past they were given the support from others. Today it is their turn to give the support.

that Barisan members will close ranks and remember that we are not fighting for individuals to become *wakil rakyat* but for the setting up of a government. All those who become candidates should in fact be faceless... all of them should use the Barisan Nasional symbol.

Q: Can you announce the allocation of seats for Barisan Nasional component parties and whether Tan Sri Rahim Thamby Chik and Ghafar Baba will be included?

Dr M: I can't remember. I am not very good at figures, as you know. That's why as to who will be the candidate and who will not be, you will hear about it when they are announced. I can't make a preliminary prediction.

Q: How about allocation of seats to component parties?

Dr M: It is okay, everybody has accepted. But I can't remember exactly how many seats I have given. Everybody looks satisfied.

Q: If you have appealed and they (the dissatisfied not in the list) still cannot accept (your plea), what measures will you take?

Dr M: We can only appeal and ask for co-operation. We do not have the power to shoot (laughter and applause). I think they are very sensible people. These people are not overzealous. Fortunately in Malaysia, I would like to say, that even among the opposition, there are not many violent people. Violent only from the mouth.

Q: There are suggestions for polling day to be a public holiday.

Dr M: I would like to appeal to everybody to release their people to go and vote. But school holidays... there will be holidays because we are using a lot of schools for polling centres. But for others, we are appealing to employers including government, to release (their employees). They can go in the morning, in the afternoon, take time off to go to vote.

Maybe, there are some who feel unhappy and disappointed, this is normal. In politics, this is a normal thing because we cannot forever remain as candidates. I am confident that all sides will give their support to the candidates in the list.

Q: How many new faces will there be among the Barisan Nasional candidates?

Dr M: I did not count. But there are new ones, there are also old ones.

Q: Will Kelantan have its own manifesto?

Dr M: It will have a manifesto but it is not in the form of a manifesto but more as an addition to the manifesto. Not separate but as an addendum to the manifesto. And they will launch it later.

Q: Will the Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers inform the candidates first and then inform the Press?

Dr M: Possibly, they will inform the candidates first since there are a few matters to attend to. Some of them have to relinquish other posts, have to make other preparations and so on. So the candidates will be told first.

Q: There is already talk on the ground that those who have not been selected are not happy. How will you overcome this problem before it becomes a burden to Umno and to the Barisan?

Dr M: We will appeal to them to accept the list (of candidates). It is not possible for us to satisfy everyone because there are many who want to be candidates. It is just like lorry licences. We have one licence to issue. Ten people want it. One gets it, nine others are not satisfied. So we increase to 10 licences. One-hundred people want them. We give to 10, 90 people are not satisfied. It is like that. We have increased the number of seats in the Dewan Rakyat and the State Legislative Assemblies. But still there are those who do not get. So the question of not being satisfied cannot be avoided.

This is a problem that is very heavy for me. To satisfy everyone is not possible.

In the beginning, there may be dissatisfaction. Maybe there is talk of operations rooms being closed. I hope

Q: A few politicians have admitted that there seems to be complacency among BN members because of the confidence that the Barisan will get a two-third majority. Would the list of candidates reflect the future leaders of the country?

Dr M: On complacency. This is dangerous. Barisan members, voters and supporters also believe that we will win easily. If there is complacency like this, this is something that is very dangerous because in an election, we cannot believe that we can win easily, although others say so. All sorts of things can happen.

As a candidate who is used to winning, used to being defeated, used to winning uncontested, I know we cannot predict the result of the election.

On the list of candidates. Normally we keep the old-timers to have continuity. But we introduce new faces among whom many are made up of young people. If we only choose the old people, it can be difficult... there could be by-elections later (laughter...).

We have a fair mix, of young and old, veterans and newcomers, so that the party will continue to be able to handle new issues with new ideas, at the same time, not forgetting past experiences. That is our formula.

Q: In 1990, the Parti Bersatu Sabah dropped a bombshell when it withdrew from the Barisan Nasional in the last minute. What are the chances of a component party repeating this?

Dr M: Very, very remote. I think that was one of the blackest parts in the history of the alliance from its existence, that one party should withdraw after accepting to contest the election together as the alliance's party.

One of the reasons why they were able to do this, of course, was because they were allowed to use their own symbol. This time we are using only one symbol, only the BN symbol. So it is not possible for them to suddenly pull out. The candidates themselves have said that they do not want to contest, but the party will still contest.