

16 AUG 1997

Mahathir-positions

POSITIONS SHOULD BENEFIT PEOPLE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Barisan Nasional leaders not to flaunt their positions.

Those positions, be they in the party or government, were not to be abused at their whims and fancies, said Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman.

In fact, he said, their positions were only to facilitate implementation of BN policies for the good of the nation.

"It is a heavy responsibility. But be mindful that it is us who choose to be elected representatives. So, we must carry out the duties of elected representatives," Dr Mahathir said when opening Gerakan's 26th annual delegates conference of the party's headquarters here.

BN component party leaders were also present.

Dr Mahathir said BN leaders and members should be humble and remain close to the people.

They should also be sensitive to the people's problems and strive to resolve them, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people were now wiser and more matured in their evaluation of issues and no longer took things for granted.

"If BN leaders are not bothered with the people's problems and are only preoccupied with their party or government positions, BN will lose support," he said.

In this context, BN leaders and members could not afford to be complacent, arrogant and over-confident of the people's support, he said.

Over-confidence could lead to complacency and erosion of support for the BN, he said.

"As such BN leaders and members have to constantly work hard to continue enjoying the people's support. We should also avoid internal squabbles which can weaken the coalition," he said.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the BN could not possibly accommodate the demands of all its component parties thus causing dissatisfaction among some of them.

But, he said, BN component parties should not look at their positions just from their own narrow viewpoints but from a wider perspective.

"It is impossible to meet the demands of all races as often they overlap or that the demands of one race run contrary to those of another," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if a party in power only entertained the demands of its own racial group, it could only be popular with that particular group but faced rejection or condemnation by the other races.

"And we know in general elections that to win, we need the votes from all the races," he said.

As such, he said, the BN could only entertain half of the demands of the various races who at the same time would continue supporting the coalition knowing that the BN government did not practise favouritism.

But, the prime minister said, no race in the country could claim that they had been ignored.

Rationally done studies clearly showed that all the races have benefited from the nation's economic development, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the privatisation policy, for instance, had brought about benefits to all the races, be they entrepreneurs who secured projects, workers given company shares or ordinary people who could buy

shares of listed companies and use the facilities provided.

"BN is the only party that can meet the demands of the various races and is accepted by a large segment of the people Therefore we must convince the people that only the BN can guarantee a brighter future for the people and country," he said.

Earlier, in his speech Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik reminded party members that victory in next year's party elections would not be a pre-requisite for their nomination as BN candidates in the coming general election.

Lim said it would be wrong for party members to assume that winning the state party chairmanship would automatically grant a safe seat to contest in the coming polls.

Similarly, it would be wrong to assume that upon winning the general election, they would automatically be appointed to state or federal posts, said Lim, who is also primary industries minister.

He said during his visits nation-wide he found that some state, division and branch Gerakan leaders were involved in bitter and damaging contests for posts.

"I wouldn't mind so much if the contests are because of divergent political views. But that is not so. On the contrary, the contests were for jockeying for nominations in the coming general election so that they can be state executive councillors or federal ministers," he said.

Lim reminded those with such ambition that they were in for a disappointment and that the party would act accordingly not to let the scramble for positions to further split the party.

On that premise, he reminded party members to learn from the defeat of the Gerakan candidate in last May's Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election.

Lim called on Gerakan members from now on to consolidate party unity and determination to recapture Teluk Intan from the DAP while retaining all seats currently held by the party in the next general election. -- Bernama

AH rn