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PM: Retain good leaders in the interest of stability

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was no need for frequent changes in leadership, especially among Barisan Nasional component parties.

"This," he said, "was because changes would only weaken a party or a country because the transition would delay progress."

Opening the 51st MIC general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, Dr Mahathir said if there were constant leadership changes, results could only be achieved after a length of time.

Most people, especially foreigners, failed to understand that in the interest of stability, Barisan Nasional component parties would rather not have a contest for top posts, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said the allegation that it was undemocratic for leaders to be returned unopposed at party elections was baseless.

Citing the case of MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and MIC deputy president Datuk S. Subramaniam who were both returned unopposed, the Prime Minister said members were now aware that fierce contests for posts could lead to rifts in the party.

"If this happens, the party will become weak and will not be able to fight in the interest of its members and the party effectively. Members are more mature and wiser now."

Dr Mahathir said if changes were forced and the new leaders failed to bring about success, then the renewal in leadership would be meaningless.

However, Dr Mahathir said changes should be made if the existing leaders were clearly incapable.

"So, in a democratic system, while we are free to choose, we should not make changes every time there is an election."

Later, addressing a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said party members should decide based on consensus whether there is a need for a contest for the top post.

"They should work on consensus. It is not necessary to change but the right to change must be there."

Asked how long a leader should serve, Dr Mahathir said there should be no limit.

Citing the case of other countries where a limit of one or two terms was set, the Prime Minister said: "If we have a good leader, let him be."

"But if you have a bad leader, he should not even be allowed for half a term."

"The system of electing the leaders democratically should remain".

When asked whether there could be a single BN party for all races instead of the present multi-party system in the future, Dr Mahathir said it could be achieved if everyone was willing to forget their different racial backgrounds.

"If you have a single party, then the people who form the minorities will always lose out because decisions are made by the majority, and the majority could be from just one race."

However, in a coalition party system like the BN, all parties have to agree on decisions.

Asked to comment on a High Court decision on May 29 which declared that Datuk M. Kayveas was not a member of the People's Progressive Party and not the lawful president of the party, Dr Mahathir said this showed that

there were people who were only interested in their own position.

Yesterday, Kayveas said he had obtained an order for stay of the judgment in default obtained by one Datuk N.S. Muthu on May 29 which ruled that he (Kayveas) was not a member of the PPP and that he could not be its president.

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