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Mahathir - party

BN MORE DEMOCRATIC, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who opened the Gerakan 27th general assembly here today, said Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties are more democratic than a separate political party which "has the word democratic as part of its name."

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said in the Gerakan for instance, freedom of expression strongly prevailed that at times he himself was not spared by the Gerakan voices.

"In Umno there is greater freedom of expression ...even speaking about untruths is allowed," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, to the laughter of about 1,000 Gerakan delegates to the assembly.

Umno and Gerakan are among 14 coalition members which make up the governing Barisan Nasional coalition.

He said this party with the word democratic as part of its name did not even allow members to speak and would not have its leaders replaced.

Dr Mahathir was apparently referring to the opposition DAP or Democratic Action Party although he did not mention it by name.

"It is supposedly for democratic action but its action is not democratic," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said the party concerned also claimed to multi-racial but it was in fact "only open to members of a family."

In lighter vein, the prime minister looked at Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and asked Lim whether he had appointed his son to be a Gerakan leader.

"Looking at Kerk (Choo Ting, Gerakan deputy president) I find it difficult to make out that he is Lim's son," Dr Mahathir said drawing another round of laughter from the delegates.

-- BERNAMA

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