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Dr Mahathir: Opposition no threat to BN in any election

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Opposition parties in the country were not a threat to Barisan Nasional in any election.

He said if all 14 BN component parties continued to practise the "give and take" political culture among each other, the BN would continue to enjoy support from the people.

"We (BN component parties) must trust each other ... to support candidates even though they are not from our own party," he said when opening the fourth Parti Demokratik Sabah congress here.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba and representatives from all BN component parties were among the guests at the congress held the Pan Pacific Sutera Hotel.

The national BN chairman said the real threat would be from BN parties when they shy away from the coalition candidates.

Dr Mahathir related to the PDS delegates that he was once a victim of such a trend when he was defeated by the Opposition in the 1969 general election in Kota Setar Selatan.

He said this trend could bring the coalition's downfall and as such all parties must give full support to whoever the candidate contesting for BN is.

"The victory of BN candidates must be ensured, a win for BN is a win for all component parties."

In Sabah, he said Umno candidates must be supported by PDS and the other component parties. The other BN components in the State are Liberal Democratic Party, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat Bersatu, Sabah Progressive Party, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah, Gerakan and MCA.

Dr Mahathir said he was happy to note that the BN concept of power-sharing had been fully understood by Sabah-based component parties. He said even Umno had been fully accepted by the people.

He said the people of Sabah now realised that it was never Umno's intention to establish a Malay or Islamic Government in Sabah when it was established here.

Dr Mahathir noted that when PDS was formed and applied to join the BN, the party, headed by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, was sincere in its political agenda.

"I believe Dompok had no intention to be Chief Minister (in 1994) but he is now the Chief Minister," he said. PDS was accepted into the BN's fold in 1995.

He said being the Chief Minister, Dompok as the State BN chairman shouldered heavy responsibilities as it would be during his tenure as head of the State Government that the State elections would be held.

The State elections have to be held by March next year.

"But he (Dompok) will not be able to achieve victory without co-operation and support from the the other BN component parties," he said.

On Sabah's economic growth, Dr Mahathir said it was lower compared to other States as the previous Government did not co-operate with the Federal Government, making it difficult for the latter to assist Sabah.

He said the country had been enjoying an eight per cent yearly economic growth and that the whole country should have enjoyed the same level of growth.

Dr Mahathir said he was sad to note that when the BN took over the State

leadership in 1994, Kota Kinabalu itself did not have enough street lights and water and that there were potholes in roads.

"The State Government then placed more emphasis on misunderstandings with the Federal Government instead of concentrating on the State's development."

He also said the New Economic Policy was based on the enlargement of the economy concept.

"We put effort into enlarging the economy and from what has been enlarged, we have distributed it to the poor and a little to the rich," he said.

Dr Mahathir and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali arrived here this afternoon after an official working visit to the Federal Territory of Labuan. After opening the PDS congress, he held a closed-door meeting with Sabah Umno.

Tomorrow the Prime Minister will attend a meet-the-people session organised by Sabah Umno at the Likas Sports Complex multi-purpose hall. He will open the Liberal Democratic Party's congress before returning to Kuala Lumpur in the afternoon.

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