

28/11/1998

Elect BN for development, says Dr M

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KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - The Prime Minister told the people of Sabah today that it was incumbent upon them to ensure a Barisan Nasional victory in the forthcoming State election because the results would serve as a barometer for the future of the coalition Government.

Making the clarion call at a gathering of State BN Youth, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the BN must win the next State election to ensure that it could continue with development efforts and to return the wealth siphoned off by the previous Parti Bersatu Sabah-led Government.

"Let's together make Sabah the premier State in Malaysia. The people of Sabah must not disappoint the nation.

"Sabah's wealth has been taken away by irresponsible Opposition leaders. Let's make Sabah prosperous once again. Let's ensure a victory for BN in the coming election," he said.

The Prime Minister's speech carried special significance because a State election will have to be held within the next 113 days. The mandate of the current State Assembly expires on March 18.

This will also be the first test for the BN after the drastic political and economic measures taken by the Government and Umno two months ago.

The Government had introduced several measures to revive the country's ailing economy, which includes, among others, the exchange rate control.

The move was to ensure that currency traders did not make quick profits at the expense of a devalued ringgit which brought hardship to the nation.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was removed from the Cabinet on Sept 2 and expelled from Umno the following day.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was given a rousing welcome by a crowd of 5,000. The crowd gathered as early as 9am to greet Dr Mahathir, whose aircraft touched down at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport's Terminal Two at 10.35am.

The people formed a line along both sides of the road with banners in support of Dr Mahathir and waved at him as he made his way to the Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Resort where he later had a closed-door meeting with the State Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir performed his Friday prayer at the State Mosque and later met State religious leaders. He had dinner with community leaders at the Pan Pacific Sutera.

He said the people should ensure that the BN would be able to win the next State election and form the Government, so that it could continue with efforts to develop the State and the nation.

"At one time, Sabah was wealthy. It had natural resources, including rainforests which had been there for million of years. However, the leaders of the past stole this from the people for their own selfish interests.

"When PBS ruled the State, they distributed the wealth among themselves and bribed those who opposed them."

Dr Mahathir said it was the duty of the people to choose a responsible party to govern the State.

He reminded the BN leaders to maintain the principles of BN by putting the interests of the people above the rest. "We have to dedicate our services to the development of Sabah so that it becomes the most developed State in Malaysia."

Dr Mahathir reminded the BN members that it was important for them to

support all BN candidates, irrespective of the party they represented.

"We have to support whoever represents the BN because what is important is for the BN to form the next Government. Winning a certain number of seats will have no meaning if the BN cannot form the Government."

Dr Mahathir said when the BN won, the people, including those who supported the party, would benefit from it.

He said the BN concept was unique because it was a coalition formed before the election. "In other countries, political parties form coalitions only when they are unable to get majority votes in the election. So, they are forced to form coalitions. This is a marriage of convenience which normally does not last."

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