

06/10/1998

Najib: About 150,000 expected at gathering

Sa'odah Elias

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - More than 150,000 members of Barisan Nasional component parties and representatives from various non-governmental organisations are expected to take part in the huge gathering at Stadium Nasional, Bukit Jalil, on Oct 10.

The gathering, originally organised by Barisan Nasional Youth as a rally to show support for the Prime Minister and BN president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has now become a BN affair.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who was appointed chairman of the co-ordinating committee for the gathering, chaired three meetings today - with the secretaries of Umno State Liaison Committees, BN secretaries-general and representatives of NGOs - to discuss preparations.

Speaking to reporters later, Najib said the 150,000 estimate was based on the commitment shown by BN component parties but the turnout was expected to be much higher.

"We want as many people as possible to come because we want this gathering to be a reflection of the real feelings of the people for Dr Mahathir.

"We want to tell the world that negative reports carried by the foreign media questioning the people's support and trust for Dr Mahathir and the BN Government are just not true," he added.

Najib said the gathering would also serve as proof to the world that the Prime Minister still commanded the greatest of respect and trust of the people and was not facing a crisis of confidence as portrayed by the foreign media.

He also said the organisers have been given a permit by the police.

The gathering, he said, would also serve as a platform for the Prime Minister to explain to the people about the latest developments in the country.

The gathering was expected to last about two hours starting with Dr Mahathir's arrival at 4.50pm.

"The agenda will include Dr Mahathir's explanation to the people, a cultural show, the singing of patriotic songs by famous local artistes and a martial arts performance," he said, adding that clippings of the recently-concluded Commonwealth Games would also be shown on the giant screens in the stadium.

Meanwhile, Umno Youth deputy head Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the gathering was solely to show the harmonious situation in the country to the world.

"In politics, people will find ways to discredit any efforts by others," he said to a question on the possibility that certain quarters may accuse him of trying to use the gathering to garner support within the movement.

Hishammuddin said this after checking the facilities at the National Stadium.

Hishammuddin said he was satisfied with the facilities at the stadium and there was no need for further renovations for the gathering.

"The stadium is beautiful and I hope the gathering will be held in a family atmosphere because, God willing, I will be coming here on that day with my children.

"We are hoping not only to fill the stadium with 150,000 people but also to fill it with an atmosphere of patriotism and send a clear message to the world of Malaysians' commitment to be a harmonious society."

( END )