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Don't risk losing all, Sabah BN told (HL)

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KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the Sabah Barisan Nasional today that it risked losing everything it has achieved if greed for position, wealth and power overcomes fair judgment.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said if the BN held on to its principle of "justice for all" and worked on the basis of sharing with other component parties, it would remain powerful and could ward off threats, both within and without.

"If we insist that our own people should be given seats at the expense of other component party leaders, then the coalition will be ruined.

"It is better to win some, than to lose all," Dr Mahathir said to the applause of some 3,000 Sabah BN members attending the Sabah BN Convention.

His hour-long speech was interrupted many times by cheers and applause from the audience, comprising members of the nine BN component parties - Umno, Sabah Progressive Party, Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat Bersatu, Liberal Democratic Party, Parti Demokratik Sabah, Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah, MCA, Gerakan and MIC.

Among those present at the one-day convention themed, "Justice For All", were Dr Mahathir's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee and BN secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

The Prime Minister's advice carries special significance and is seen as timely as Sabah is preparing for the next State election.

The current term of the State Assembly expires in March, next year.

Dr Mahathir said if there was no justice and fairness, even the closest allies would turn enemies.

"If, for instance, there are 100 seats and a particular party in the BN insists that it should contest in all, then it runs the risk of winning only 10.

"But if it contests only in 50 and shares the other 50 seats with other component parties, it can win at least 25."

This, Dr Mahathir, said was because the component parties would help each other in their constituencies.

"With our help, our friends in other component parties can win more seats and we can jointly form the Government," he said, adding that the key to the BN's success was to share.

He said it was better to get 50 per cent of something big than 100 per cent of something which was much smaller.

He added that the foreigners were often intrigued by the ability of the 14 parties under the BN to work together in peace.

"In their countries, even a coalition of two parties cannot work together."

Dr Mahathir said it was of utmost importance for BN leaders to use fair judgment and not sentiments in decision-making.

"If decisions are made based on sentiments and emotions, then there will be no justice," he said.

"A judge cannot rule in favour of a guilty defendant simply because he was his (the judge's) nephew.

"A contract cannot be awarded to someone just because he belongs to the same party as we do, although his tender proposal is far from attractive."

Dr Mahathir said although the Opposition claimed otherwise, Malaysia remained resilient to pressures from foreign forces because of the ability

of the various races to stay united.

"I received a letter from a leader of an Opposition party claiming that Malaysia has failed.

"The fact is, the Opposition is not thankful.

"Although the country is facing economic problems, we do not have to seek the assistance of the International Monetary Fund. This is because our economy is more solid than those of other countries which had sought the help of the IMF.

"The people believe so, but the Opposition does not," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir reminded the BN members of the need for continued unity in the party.

"If the BN crumbles from disunity, then we will lose our strength and will be forced to bow to neo-colonialism."

He added that the Government would continue to endeavour to improve the living standards of the people.

"Although we help races which are behind, it is only to ensure that they can catch up with the others.

"But we do not take from the rich to prosper the poor.

"We believe in levelling up the society and not levelling them down," he added.

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