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BN pledges greater progress for nation (HL)

Lokman Mansor

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad unveiled last night Barisan Nasional's manifesto for the November 29 general elections, highlighting 42 years of Malaysia's achievements at home and internationally under the coalition's rule.

"Malaysia: Free, United, Successful", the title of the manifesto, tells of the country's economic, political and social progress that makes it a model for other nations and an audible, respected voice on the global stage.

At the launch, which was attended by leaders and supporters of the parties in the coalition, the Prime Minister and BN chairman called on the voters to allow the BN Government to continue with the mandate to bring even greater progress for the nation.

"We want people to understand what we have done and what we are going to do .. we promise what we can deliver," Dr Mahathir said.

The remarkable turnaround in the economy, which slumped with others in the region as a result of the 1997 Asian currency crisis, is highlighted as one of the latest achievements of the BN. Hence, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the rogue currency traders, the selective capital controls, threats of globalisation, and the economy's strong fundamentals are mentioned or referred to in the manifesto.

Under Free, the manifesto lists down 15 major achievements, including the nation being free from the influence and control of major powers including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), free from indebtedness as a result of borrowings and aid, free from attacks by rogue currency traders, free to criticise the abuse of power by anyone in the international arena, and free from interference by foreign powers and media.

Under United, the manifesto highlights 13 major areas. It says Malaysians are united because of elements that cause disunity have been blunted and eliminated through the New Economic Policy, because wealth is distributed fairly, and because every citizen is given political freedom. Under Successful, the manifesto lists eight major points on the economy, six each on religion and politics, and nine each on social and foreign policy.

On economy, Malaysia is successful because it enjoys the highest economic growth among developing countries, with a 30-year average of 7 per cent for gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

Economic success also takes the form of the Government's ability to withstand the attacks by rogue currency traders, the country's strong foreign reserves, modern infrastructure, strong economic and financial position sans foreign aid, the Bumiputeras' high level of economic participation, fair wealth distribution among the various races, and home-grown policies to promote economic recovery.

The manifesto says Malaysia is successful because Islam is the religion of the state and is extensively promoted, noting that Islamic banking and insurance systems have been implemented and have gained the faith of all races and religions.

On the social front, the manifesto highlights BN's success in improving the quality of life, eradicating poverty, striking a balance in urban and rural development, and protecting the rights of workers.

It said Malaysia has also been successful in fostering close

relationship with neighbouring countries, participating actively in the United Nations peace-keeping efforts, and taking part in international debates concerning the economy, finance, trade and fair globalisation. "All these are possible due to the Barisan Nasional. The proof is seen not just in one or two years but since Independence. The Barisan Nasional leadership is far-sighted. Vision 2020 is proof of that," Dr Mahathir said.

The manifesto said new ideas will continue to be introduced and implemented to make Malaysia outstanding among the world's achievers.

"For all these achievements the Barisan Nasional with all sincerity expresses its appreciation and gratitude to the people for the support and mandate given all this while to lead this beloved country.

The 20-page BN manifesto contains short sentences and colour photographs on every page, depicting various achievements throughout the country's history. The Opposition's manifesto launched last month contains 44 pages of text.

Dr Mahathir said the Opposition parties can afford to make grand promises because they realise they cannot win and will not have to keep their word. The language used is also complicated to obscure what they actually mean.

"We do not cow-cheat in some obscure language so that later on we can wriggle out of it. We are not wriggling out of anything. We are promising what we can do," he said.