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Dissolution-Reaction (BN)

BN STALWARTS CONFIDENT OF VICTORY

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today that the Barisan Nasional (BN) has governed the country well, a fact which cannot be denied by the rakyat.

He said the people also knew that the country had come out of its darkest hours of economic and financial crisis thanks to the brave leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I think as we go around the country, we are very convinced that the people know that the Barisan Nasional has governed well," he told reporters here in reaction to Dr Mahathir's announcement on the dissolution of the Dewan Rakyat tomorrow to pave the way for the 10th general election.

Dr Ling said: "The people know that just one year ago we met with the most dangerous crisis since our Independence, and because we have Dr Mahathir who was brave, radical and bold, the country has overcome its deepest and darkest hour."

On the prime minister's statement that the Opposition may use aggressive campaign tactics, he said Malaysians were generally peace-loving people.

Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister, said the few riots that occurred before were confined to a very small number of people while the rest did not respond to calls by certain parties for them to go against the government.

He said the BN would continue to go to the ground to ensure the coalition's victory in the election.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik expected a lot of religious and racial issues would be brought up by the Opposition but said the BN would not resort to negative campaigning.

"What is most important is the solidarity and the unity of the people. BN has always unified the people and spent a lot of efforts to keep the multi-racial and multi-religious people of this country united," he said.

He said opposition parties, which have formed the so-called Alternative Front, were opportunists with no proposals or strategies for the betterment of the country.

Dr Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister, said Gerakan would hand over its list of election candidates to Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, in the next few days.

Gerakan has 10 parliamentary and 27 state seats.

Asked whether his party and MCA would exchange seats, he said: "We are talking about one or two seats but I don't think we have come to any agreement yet."

"In the end, this is not an important issue as it is not like taking one (seat) from the other. If I feel that I have a better candidate in one of MCA's constituencies and vice versa, we can always go for mutual exchange."

On Pulau Pinang, Dr Lim claimed that the DAP had hatched a "Tanjung IV" project to capture the state from the BN.

But he said the people of Pulau Pinang would not forget how they had rejected similar initiatives before.

"We will do well, and we believe the people of Penang will go for stability, development and greater opportunities in facing the challenges of the new millennium.

Asked whether he was surprised by Dr Mahathir's announcement, Dr Lim

said: "I think it is the best time to hold an election, and as usual our PM's judgement is the best...The Barisan is strongly united under the leadership of Dr Mahathir."

The MP for Rompin Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Mohamed Jarjis told reporters at the Parliament lobby that BN, with Umno as its backbone, should be able to return to Parliament with at least a two-thirds majority.

"What matters most are not individuals in Parliament but BN because this is the party that will protect the race, religion and country into the future," he said.

Datuk Badruddin Amiruldin (BN-Yan) expressed confidence that the voters would show their appreciation for BN's good work by returning it with a strong mandate.

"What is important now is for all of us to go to the ground to explain to people who have been misled by the opposition," he said.

Government Backbenchers Club chairman Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (Parit Sulong) said the BN election machinery had been ready for the election, and it was the right time to call election as the opposition was in disarray.

Sarawak United People's Party (Supp) deputy president Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the Sarawak BN was confident of retaining its 26 parliamentary seats despite the presence of Keadilan which has teamed up with two other opposition parties in the state.

Law felt that the people would continue to support the BN as its power-sharing concept had brought them plenty of development.

Keadilan was still new in Sarawak and the people could not accept the party, he said.

Law, who is Science, Technology and Environment Minister, said the weather for the next couple of weeks was expected to be generally good although there could be heavy afternoon rains in certain parts of the peninsula and the interior of Sarawak.

Last month, Keadilan's Sarawak liaison chief Yusuf Abdul Rahman said the party would contest 15 to 17 of the 28 parliamentary seats up for grabs in the state where the election will not involve state seats.

-- BERNAMA

AKT YBY