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BN to field candidates who are capable, popular: Dr M

BARISAN Nasional (BN) will field candidates who are not only capable but also popular to ensure a big victory in the 10th general elections to be held on November 29, Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

"We need to find candidates who are popular as well as capable in managing their constituencies," he said in a special interview with TV3 in Kuala Lumpur last night. The transcript of the interview was released by the Prime Minister's Department to Bernama.

Expressing confidence that BN will again win a two-thirds majority, Dr Mahathir said the party has categorised constituencies to be contested into white, grey or black.

White denotes seats which the BN has a strong chance of winning, and black those it can expect a tough fight. The grey areas are 50-50 contests.

"We see, for this election, the white areas are more than half (of the total) and the grey ones are not that grey. This gives us confidence that BN will win more than 128 seats," he said.

A total of 193 parliamentary and 394 state assembly seats will be contested this time.

Dr Mahathir said a two-thirds majority is crucial as it allows the establishment of a stable government that can formulate effective policies and nation-building programmes.

"It is not merely to amend the Constitution."

He dismissed suggestions that Umno, the senior component party of the BN, had compromised too much and given in to too many of the non-Malays' demands.

"It's not true at all. We only honour the promises and the understanding we had when we attained independence," the Prime Minister said.

The people must accept the reality that Malays and non-Malays live in Malaysia. "We cannot evict the non-Malays... we accept them as the people of this country. As citizens, they must be treated as such," he added.

On their part, the non-Malays recognise the position of the Malays and do not question the status of Islam as the official religion provided they are free to embrace the religion of their choice.

"This has made our country very peaceful. If we take 100 per cent for ourselves, there will be no peace, then we cannot develop the country.

"To me, it's better to get 50 per cent from something that exists rather than getting 100 per cent of nothing," Dr Mahathir said.

In a multi-racial country like Malaysia, no single community can expect 100 per cent of its requests and demands to be met.

"The Malays are dissatisfied, the Chinese are dissatisfied, the Indians are also dissatisfied. This is the best situation... if one race is found to be very satisfied, this means the other races are not receiving their share."

Asked to what extent civil servants might show their support for former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the ballot, Dr Mahathir said he is confident the majority will continue to vote Barisan.

No doubt some officers in government sympathise with Anwar but their number has declined. Many initially believed that Anwar was victimised but now it is clear there was no victimisation, the Prime Minister said.

While who they vote for is their prerogative, the Government wants its

employees to concentrate on performing their duties, he said.

"But if they spend their time in the office campaigning, like some teachers who purposely raise feelings of hatred against the Government, it will destroy the administration."

He said the opposition is prepared to instigate kindergarten students to hate certain individuals and the Government, including giving them photographs of national leaders to trample on.

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