

22 JUL 1999
Mahathir-Kelantan
BN WANTS TO RECAPTURE KELANTAN

KOTA BAHARU, July 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced today the mission of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in Kelantan.

Dr Mahathir, who is the BN chairman, said that the BN's mission was to recapture Kelantan from PAS to free the people of the sufferings they had endured under the government led by PAS which had used religion for its own interest.

"As such, the people of Kelantan should help themselves by voting in the BN (in the coming general election)," he said at a gathering of some 3,000 BN leaders, here.

The gathering was the first since Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, handed over the leadership of the Kelantan Umno to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah on June 20.

"On winning, we (the BN) will not do what they (PAS) did. We will be fair and just in our administration as the people of Kelantan have been suffering under PAS rule," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Kelantan had not achieved the level of progress which it should because the PAS government did not have the expertise to rule the state.

He said this should not have happened as Kelantan has many capable people with many of them who were professionals and businessmen and holding high posts in the federal government.

The state had not attained progress as it should as the people had not voted in the right government, he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded them that God would only help those who help themselves.

He said that PAS and Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat need not be cast aside but could be given appropriate roles.

"Don't vote for him but call him when the last rites need to be performed at funerals," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that they were only competent in the religious aspects.

He said that if there was a war and Nik Aziz was appointed general, he could not be expected to do his job as it was not his field.

He however, in jest, said that Nik Aziz could still be a general in the army's religious corp where he would not be required to hold a weapon.

Dr Mahathir said that PAS, which ruled Kelantan since 1990, had failed to bring development including overcoming the water crisis in the state.

The prime minister said that PAS did not have a clear vision but only to divide the Malays.

He said that the party's policies were constantly changing, like at one time when they branded Umno members as infidels, having their own imams to lead prayers at mosques and praying in a different mosque in villages and now, they differentiate between good-looking women and those who were otherwise.

"To them, they are just for the purpose of retaining power, to remain as menteri besar and becoming prime minister," he said.

He said that PAS' plan to auction Putrajaya was only a way to accuse the government of extravagance and instil hatred among the people to obtain extra votes in the election.

"They are prepared to do anything for a specific target -- to secure

votes in the election," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the opposition parties were making promises including things they could not possibly fulfil because they believe they would not be able to form a government after the coming general election.

"As such, they dare make promises like paying pension payment to housewives," he said.

He said that the BN was not prepared to make promises the party surely could not keep but pledged to develop the country.

The prime minister said that Umno's objective had also not changed since independence 42 years ago which was to ensure that the country was truly independent and progressive and that harmony was preserved in the multi-racial society.

Umno's struggles were in the interest of the religion, race and nation, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that it was essential for members of BN component parties to support candidates chosen to be fielded in the coming election irrespective of their race or the party they represent.

He said that even the minority race in a constituency had a vital role in ensuring the victory of the BN candidate.

The prime minister advised all members of the BN component parties not to resort to factionalism and not to differentiate between old and new members, citing the readmission of former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 members.

"Today, for Umno in Kelantan there is no difference between members who are former 46 or not," he said.

He said that it was vital for the BN to obtain a two-third majority so that the government could implement programmes for the benefit of the people even if they were unpopular.

-- BERNAMA

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