

22/03/1999

Dr M: Co-operation within coalition vital

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded grassroots leaders of the Barisan Nasional of the importance of the principle of co-operation within the coalition.

Stressing that the nation and party's remarkable success since the independence was the result of the co-operation between members of the coalition, Dr Mahathir said only by maintaining such co-operation would the country be able to achieve its aspirations.

"We will be able to maintain the current pace of progress and stability if we sustain the present form of co-operation among component parties.

"The recent victory in the Sabah election is a reflection of such co-operation," he said when addressing leaders of Kedah BN at Dewan Seri Negeri.

The meeting with the BN leaders was part of Dr Mahathir's itinerary of his two-day visit to the State.

Dr Mahathir said sticking to the concept of "I scratch your back and you scratch my back" would ensure BN's success in the next general election.

He said every party in the coalition owed each other for their election success.

In jest, Dr Mahathir said MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu stayed undefeated in his Sungai Siput parliamentary constituency due to support from Umno.

"Whereas if we go by the percentage of Indian voters, MIC will not be able to stand in any seat.

"But the votes from the Indians, no matter how small, are vital to Umno and that's why we need to help Samy Vellu."

Dr Mahathir also recounted how the BN Government had succeeded in developing the country.

He also recounted the history of the formation of the Alliance which consisted of Umno, MCA and MIC.

Dr Mahathir said it was the success in forming the Alliance that convinced the British to accord the country independence.

The Prime Minister also said the May 13, 1969 racial riots had made leaders of the country more mature.

The black episode in the country's history, he said, had spurred the people to strive and share the economic success.

He said the successful distribution of wealth was the reason for prevailing peace in the nation.

Dr Mahathir called on the BN leaders to fully understand the concept and spirit of the coalition.

Saying that Malaysia was then a country which was difficult to develop in view of its racial composition and historical background of individual States, the Prime Minister said the BN Government had overcome many barriers to achieve the current progress.

However, Dr Mahathir said some quarters had misled the people into believing that the current success could be achieved by any Government.

"But many countries have failed to taste our success because their Governments are incompetent.

"The success of this country is the result of the mandate given to the party which is capable of developing the country.

"It is the efficiency of the BN Government which has transformed the country into a stable and respectable one," he added.

The Prime Minister also criticised Pas for its stand on several matters including the party's stand on its willingness to co-operate with anyone including the devil to topple the BN.

He said the opposition party had belittled women by stating they should stay at home and not be involved in useful activities.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were welcomed by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and local leaders at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport.

Later, the Umno president had an hour-long closed-door meeting with members of the State Umno liaison committee and Youth and Wanita leaders.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the people to be wary of leaders using religion to achieve their political interest. He also warned the people to be on guard against attempts by foreigners to make certain individuals their stooges.

Speaking to a capacity crowd at Stadium Darul Aman, the Prime Minister said the people should realise by now that Pas leaders had been using Islam to win votes and support for their party.

"Pas has been misleading the people into believing that they are struggling for Islam ... believe me, they are using the religion merely to win votes," he said, adding that Pas was responsible for disuniting the Muslims.

Dr Mahathir also criticised the opposition party for influencing the students to carry out street demonstrations. He said Pas had given the support to these students to demonstrate and neglect their studies.

The Prime Minister also took to task Angkatan Keadilan Sosial (Adil), saying that the organisation had been made a tool by Pas to secure political mileage.

He said Pas had seen an opportunity from the sacking of an Umno leader and the party was showing its support for Adil to win votes.

"Those in Adil should not allow themselves to be cheated by Pas," he said, adding that even Adil had been rejected by the people as evident in the recent Sabah election.

"They had tried their luck in Sabah but had no influence and that is why Adil does not want to register as a political party," he added.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the attempt by foreigners to topple the Barisan Nasional Government.

Referring to the support given by US vice-president Al Gore to the so-called reformasi movement during last year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, the Prime Minister said the American leader had wanted someone to lead the country and become their stooge.

"We must remember ... Al-Gore doesn't love this country and he doesn't love the people of Malaysia.

"They are only interested in putting someone who can become their stooge," he added.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that no foreign element could interfere with Malaysian affairs.

"We will determine who rule this country ... not Al-Gore or any foreigner ... we will vote who will lead this country.

"Malaysia is our country and we determine our own future ... foreigners have no right to determine our destiny," he said.

The gathering was also attended by Sanusi, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

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