

27 NOV 1999

Mahathir-Grateful

DON'T VICTIMISE OWN RACE, DR M ADVISES PAS, KEADILAN

KANGAR, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded PAS and Keadilan not to victimise their own race just to secure the votes of DAP supporters in this election.

Urging them to be grateful, he said: Just to get DAP supporters' votes, you are willing to sabotage the own race.

" They don't realise their good fortune came about because of Umno," he said addressing a leader-with-the people gathering at the Kangar Municipal Council field here.

"The highly qualified people in PAS must remember they can go to foreign universities for education, receive scholarship because Umno protected the special privileges (of the Malays). If not, you'll continue to remain dwarfed and be paupers, without knowledge and live in misery," he said to a thunderous applause in approval from among 4,000 Barisan Nasional (BN) supporters.

Braving the heavy rain an hour before the function started at 3pm, people from all walks of life arrived in droves at the soggy pitch to hear Dr Mahathir's speech and to see him in person.

Dr Mahathir's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and his wife Datin Seri Shamsiah Mohamed Yassin and all BN candidates were present.

Dr Mahathir said when Umno protected the special rights of the Malays, the other races were not angry because they knew their rights were not taken away.

" We're not going to rob from the Chinese to give to the Malays," he said.

He urged PAS members and supporters to open their hearts and see for themselves the real situation around them.

"Read Al-Quran and see whether the interpretations of the Quranic versus were as the same as PAS' interpretations," he said.

He also said PAS taught the people not to be grateful which was clearly against the Islamic teachings.

He advised Muslims to preserve the unity among them.

" We need a strong government that can help us. We cannot be divided. If we are divided, we will be weak. We are already lemah. If we are split, we will become more weak," he said to yet another round of Hidup Umno (Long Live Umno) thunderous applause from the crowd.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the history of PAS' inception which caused the split among the Malays.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said Umno and PAS could actually work together as one race of the same religious faith but the latter was using Islam as the divider.

" In politics, we (Umno and PAS) can differ but we should not be at odds over religion," he said.

He urged PAS leaders not to interpret religion merely to alienate themselves from Umno supporters.

"Don't interpret the religion solely to segregate Umno members from PAS... we can pray and listen to religious sermons together," he said.

According to Dr Mahathir, PAS members did not work towards forging unity but instead their actions lead to division among the Malays.

For instance, they would use the sermons to curse the government but Umno supporters would not leave the mosques solely to safeguard Malay

unity.

Dr Mahathir also said the people's support for BN was growing while cracks have appeared in the so-called Alternative Front.

He reiterated the BN's confidence of securing two-thirds majority in this election.

He also said BN would not face big problems in retaining Perlis, Kedah and Terengganu which had been the target of PAS.

"In fact, we can also recapture Kelantan this time," he said.

Asked on his position in the Kubang Pasu parliamentary seat, Dr Mahathir said there were efforts to erode people's support for him by slandering.

-- BERNAMA

NZ AD TS