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Dr M: No place for PBS and Bersekutu in the BN

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KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - The Barisan Nasional has permanently shut the door on Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan's Parti Bersatu Sabah and Datuk Harris Salleh's Parti Bersekutu.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has made this abundantly clear since hitting the campaign trail last night and described a claim that PBS would return to the BN as a "big lie and a political gimmick".

He said Harris' Bersekutu, meanwhile, was an "opportunistic party".

Another recurring theme in the speeches of the Prime Minister was the need for the BN to win enough seats to form a strong and stable State Government.

The two-day polling starts next Friday, with 199 candidates from the BN, PBS, Bersekutu, Parti Setia and Pas as well as 27 Independents locked in keen tussles for the 48 seats.

Dr Mahathir spoke in Menggatal last night and today he went to Tuaran, Papar and Penampang where Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok is involved in a six-cornered fight.

In Tuaran this morning, Dr Mahathir said PBS had miscalculated when it bolted from the BN anticipating that the ruling coalition, especially Umno candidates, would be defeated in the 1990 general election.

Dr Mahathir said now, desperate for votes, Pairin was telling the people that his party would be joining the BN after the polls.

"This is a big lie, a political gimmick.

"How can we (BN) trust people who ditched friends for personal gain ... keluar, tak ada masuk lagi (out, no return)," he said.

On Bersekutu, the Prime Minister said this was an opportunistic party which only emerged during the election, and Harris and his associates in the party were not active in between elections.

Dr Mahathir said the people of Sabah would suffer under an Opposition State Government, adding that a cordial working relationship between State and Federal Government was crucial.

He said even PBS and Bersekutu had admitted this.

(Both PBS and Bersekutu pledged to enhance Federal and State relations in their election manifestos.)

Dr Mahathir said by retaining the State BN, the people would be rewarded with a bonus.

"Vote one but get two," he said explaining that the State BN victory would give the people "two Governments", a BN State Government and a BN Federal Government.

On Pas' participation in the polls, the Prime Minister said its only aim was to split Muslim votes, which it calculated would be to the disadvantage of Umno.

Later, at a similar function in Papar, Dr Mahathir said the people should be wise enough to make comparisons between the previous administration and that of the BN.

He advised the people that this election was to determine the State Government and not the victory of individuals.

"The BN must win enough and sufficient seats to form a strong and stable Government," he said.

He also revealed that Harris had once told him Bersekutu was capable of winning up to 42 seats, which Dr Mahathir said was impossible.

"Although Harris is a friend, there is no way that we can be political

partners," he said.

Dr Mahathir also told the gathering that special attention would be given to Sabah by the Federal Government and this could only be done through a BN State Government.

Earlier today, the Prime Minister met with State religious teachers and imam where he warned Muslims in Sabah to be wary of groups which claimed to struggle for Islam but were actually disrupting unity.

He said in Sabah, Muslims accounted for only 30 per cent of the population and must maintain their unity.

"As a minority group (in Sabah), Muslims must be united as this is what strengthens our position. With the support and co-operation of followers of other religions, we can form a good Government."

Later, addressing a large gathering at the Kota Kinabalu High School, Dr Mahathir said the biggest achievement of the BN was in bringing political stability, without which businesses could not prosper.

He paid tribute to the strength of the Chinese business community, which helped protect the economy from currency traders' attacks.

At the same time, the Government was capable of bringing political stability, he said.

"Big and small businesses alike would be disrupted if there were riots on the streets," he said. "In Malaysia, coffee shops operate for 24 hours and they are patronised by all communities."

The school Dr Mahathir went to is in the constituency of Sembulan where the BN candidate, Datuk Chau Chin Tang is involved in a four-cornered fight.

"The people of Sabah should vote for BN candidates," Dr Mahathir said, "regardless of which community they belong to."

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