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Mahathir-BN

DR MAHATHIR ORDERS BN TO ACTIVATE POLLS MACHINERY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who chaired a Barisan Nasional (BN) Supreme Council meeting here today, has directed component parties of the governing coalition to activate their election machineries without having to wait until nomination day.

This called for cooperation among BN component parties in setting up and activating operations rooms in all constituencies, said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman and Umno president.

Speaking at a press conference after the two-hour-long meeting, Dr Mahathir said it also agreed to set up;

- \* a BN manifesto drafting committee; and

- \* a BN information committee to gather questions and issues requiring the coalition's attention.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will chair the manifesto-drafting committee while Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, the information committee.

The BN comprises peninsula-based parties Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan and PPP, Sabah-based LDP, Akar, UPKO, PBRS and SAPP and Sarawak-based PBB, SUPP, PBDS and SNAP.

Asked on the focus of the BN manifesto this time around, Dr Mahathir said it would spell out to Malaysians what plans the BN has in store for the country's future.

"We'll strive to resolve as much as possible the people's problems and provide them with greater opportunities to make Malaysians lead a more prosperous and decent life and get better-paid," said the prime minister.

Asked whether the formation of the manifesto-drafting committee meant that the BN had yet to come up with one for the coming general election, Dr Mahathir said: "It seems so."

Asked by a journalist when the committee could get the BN manifesto ready, Dr Mahathir said: "You're fishing for the election date."

"That we'll have to see, if Datuk Seri Abdullah works hard, he'll do it fast, if he's lazy, it'll take a little longer," the prime minister said in a lighter vein.

Asked about him attending the on-going sodomy trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as ordered by the High Court here, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, if the law requires that I attend court, I will attend court."

The court on Oct 21 ordered Dr Mahathir to attend the trial on Thursday for the defence to interview him before deciding whether to call him as its witness.

Asked on the effect of Anwar's allegations in court, Dr Mahathir said: "No effect, the effect is the same as poisoning case," referring to Anwar's claim that he was poisoned with arsenic.

On court's order specialists of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Hospital examined Anwar and later declared that he did not suffer from acute or chronic arsenic poisoning.

Anwar, who had been called to enter his defence against the sodomy charge, testified that some Cabinet ministers had abused their position but claimed that no action was taken against them.

When asked about this, Dr Mahathir said: "Prove it, charge the government."

Dr Mahathir said: "He (Anwar) seems to come up with all sorts of allegations.

"Proving that it is true is another matter. Anyone can make allegations. We too can do that."

Dr Mahathir said: "We have clear proof that Datuk Seri Anwar has several cronies and they are all wealthy.

"And we know that he used money to bribe Umno divisions to nominate him to contest against Tun Ghafar (Baba). We're aware of so many other trickeries by Datuk Seri Anwar."

"He can try to deny," said Dr Mahathir, referring to the 1993 Umno election when Anwar was returned unopposed for the party deputy presidency after securing substantial nominations from Umno divisions.

This prompted Ghafar to withdraw from defending the party's number two post.

Anwar was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 last year and expelled from Umno the next day.

-- BERNAMA

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