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Dr M: Refrain from issues which threaten party integrity

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The Prime Minister today advised Indians not to highlight issues that lead to the defeat of MIC candidates at the general election as this could leave the community without representation in Government.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Indians should not blame the Barisan Nasional or other races if such a situation arose.

"Let us not have Indians who purposely look for issues to be blown up to threaten the integrity of the MIC.

"IF MIC candidates lose, maybe the Government will not have a representative from the Indian community in it. Do not blame the BN or other races if this happens," he said when opening the 53rd annual delegates conference at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The Prime Minister was earlier given a grand welcome by delegates led by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

A decorated umbrella similar to those used in ancient Indian courts for kings was held over Dr Mahathir as he entered the building to the accompaniment of traditional Indian music and dances.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and heads of BN component parties, including MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

Dr Mahathir said Government programmes were aimed at ensuring social, economic and political justice by taking the interest of all races into consideration.

He said MIC leaders and members should understand the way the BN government handled racial problems.

Pointing out weaknesses inherent in the Opposition, the BN chairman said that it was the choice of Indians.

He said the Opposition was getting together just for the general election and would break up after the polls.

He said the Opposition was only interested in obtaining more seats and not in forming a Government to implement development programmes for the nation.

"I am confident that the MIC will continue to give its co-operation and work harder to ensure harmony and racial unity so that the BN Government can continue to develop the country for Malaysians, including the Indian community.

"There is no other choice for the Indian community other than the BN to fight for its aspirations and hopes and that of their children and grandchildren in the future in this fortunate country."

Dr Mahathir said opposition parties had already shown their intolerant attitude.

While they wanted the BN to be liberal, he said, they had threatened to close all newspapers and TV and radio stations that did not support them.

"Their Government will definitely be a dictatorial government which will not allow freedom of speech and newspapers run by the Opposition.

"All other types of freedom will also be taken away by them. Will the Indian community be more free under an Opposition government?

"We know the DAP, for example, belongs to Lim Kit Siang and his family. No one can oppose him. Kit Siang's dynasty will control the DAP forever. Indians in the DAP can only stay there if they support Kit Siang."

He hoped Indians will not be taken in by the promises of the DAP and the

Opposition coalition.

Dr Mahathir noted that Indians played a crucial role in ensuring a BN win in constituencies where Malay or Chinese voters were the majority.

He said the MIC could provide the "casting vote" where the BN candidate fought an Opposition candidate from the Malay or Chinese community.

He said there was no constituency where the Indians voters were in the majority.

"The Indian community is split into too many political parties. Therefore, MIC candidates need the support of Malay and Chinese voters."

He said Malay and Chinese candidates will support MIC candidates just as Indian voters support BN candidates from other racial backgrounds.

Dr Mahathir praised MIC president Samy Vellu and his "excellent leadership" to loud applause from the 1,350 delegates and 4,500-odd observers.

"Truly, Samy is not a politician who can be easily matched. He is courageous, vocal and, without being shy or hesitant, voices his views in a straight-forward manner an open manner even though sometimes it is controversial.

"Other than his ability to lead an important ministry, we acknowledge his ability over the years to bring progress to the Indian community so that it can be on the same standing as the other races."

He said the Government had managed to help the Indian community even though the party only had one minister in the Cabinet as Samy Vellu always fought for the rights of the community at Cabinet meetings.

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