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Dr M: Barisan is needed to achieve developed status

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - As the general election looms, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Barisan Nasional needs to remain in power because there is a lot more to be done in achieving developed nation's status.

He said this was about responsibility and pursuing a vision, not about clinging to power.

The Prime Minister added that after charting progress step-by-step, the nation had reached a very challenging era brought about by the Information Age.

"Now, there is a need for a total change in perspectives towards the world around us, society, the way we rule and the way we do business," he told a Wanita BN gathering at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He said in this context, the ruling coalition had the knowledge and experience to carry on with the unfinished work. Making sure the people have knowledge, competency and professional qualities to meet the challenges of IT, was one example, he said.

"We have much to do ... not greed to hold on to power forever but we have a vision. We have a huge responsibility ... we cannot neglect this responsibility," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was present.

Providing a comparison with the opposition alliance, Dr Mahathir said BN was not a fly-by-night party and described the ruling coalition as "an alliance for nation-building."

"Our marriage is permanent," he said to the applause of the audience.

He said the opposition parties came together for the election but did not present their programme for the various problems facing the society. He mentioned HIV and dadah, among others.

Dr Mahathir stressed in his speech the need for BN to close ranks once seat allocation and candidates were decided.

He told reporters later that the ruling coalition has not started negotiations on seat allocation, saying that this would not be a problem.

Asked to expand on BN's unfinished development agenda, the Prime Minister said development of a country took a long time and the nation has made good progress.

"Unfortunately, we have not yet become a fully developed country," he said. "Certain parts of the country are now fully developed as pointed out by members of the International Advisory Panel the Multimedia Super Corridor who, when here, recently said Malaysia was a developed country.

"Of course, they were in Kuala Lumpur, Cyberjaya, Putrajaya and all that.

"But there are parts which are not so developed. We are concerned for our people and we want to work for them."

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