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Don't succumb to dirty tactics, warns Mahathir

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MALAYSIANS should not succumb to the opposition's dirty tactics but decide for themselves who they want to head the government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Anticipating that the coming general election will be the dirtiest in the country's history, Dr Mahathir said there are already signs that the opposition parties are deploying such tactics to garner votes.

"The opposition will resort to all sorts of threats and instigations. Not only that, they are being assisted by foreign manipulators and their media," he told newsmen after opening the annual general meeting of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the election would be made even dirtier as the opposition had sanctioned vulgarity and cursing, and they had already embarked on such action in their ceramah.

On the converse, the Prime Minister said the ruling party, Barisan Nasional (BN) will not resort to dirty tactics and will not seek assistance from foreigners to gain voters' confidence.

"We would not seek the help of foreigners as the party believed the people were proud of their freedom and would choose a party free of the manipulation of foreign powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, was asked to elaborate on his earlier remarks in his opening speech about the dirty tactics used by the opposition.

He also said election campaigns should not be held for longer period as it may build up tension and lead to racial riots as proven during the 1969 elections.

He also took to task foreign media who did not provide the actual picture of the country's political and economic situation such as showing only footage of policemen using a little violence on demonstrators to control the situation but did not provide such coverage when the policemen were being hit by the demonstrators.

"I have also been described as a dictator who had assaulted Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (the former Deputy Prime Minister) and frame charges against him.

"They are using the foreign media to attack us. Have you read or seen the foreign media say anything good about us?

"The foreign media have also accused me of being a dictator who supplied hundreds of million of dollars to Nelson Mandela for the ANC (African National Congress) in the general election in South Africa," he said.

On the proposal that the premiership be rotated among leaders of the four opposition parties which have formed a pact, Dr Mahathir said it would not work because the country would have a government led by four parties with different leaders having different views.

Under such a pact, he said each party would rule for 15 months, starting with PAS' so-called "Islamic state", followed by DAP's "Malaysian Malaysia", then a government led by Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail of Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) and Syed Hussin Ali of Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

"Malaysians will be confused over the different policies," he said, adding even before the opposition sets up a coalition government, they had been squabbling over who should be Prime Minister, not on trying to win the election."

On whether the country's Constitution only allows Malays to become the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said: "There is no such provision in the Constitution ... I only follow the Constitution."

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