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Mahathir-Sabah (BN)

"TWO-IN-ONE" GOVERNMENT FOR SABAH IF BN VOTED IN

TUARAN, March 5 (Bernama) -- The people in Sabah will get a "two-in-one" government at the state and federal levels if the Barisan Nasional (BN) is voted in in the state election next week, a package which Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad described as the best option to ensure the state's future.

Speaking at an election rally for BN candidates here today, he likened voters putting a cross on the ballot papers for the BN's "dacing" (scales) symbol to receiving a "bonus" as they would be getting at one go two governments cooperating closely in all matters.

"One cross for the dacing and double is the benefit, what else do we want," he said to the applause of thousands who had gathered to welcome his arrival to the coastal town known for its tourist attractions.

Dr Mahathir said the central BN government would not admit the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) into its fold even if the opposition party garnered enough seats to form the state government after the March 12 and 13 state election.

The Prime Minister said he did not want to see a repeat of the federal government being "stabbed in the back" as had happened in 1990.

The BN was then preparing for the general election in the country and the PBS pulled out of the BN at the last minute to align itself with the Parti Semangat 46 resulting in the BN losing a strong coalition partner in Sabah.

"PBS is not a true friend. It is only looking for opportunities and as such we could not be friendly with such parties," he said.

As for Parti Bersekutu, which is also contesting in the upcoming state election and now headed by former chief minister Datuk Harris Salleh, Dr Mahathir said the people in Sabah should totally reject the party as it only emerged not long before the election.

The Prime Minister said he did not see why the presence of BN leaders from peninsular Malaysia campaigning in Sabah for BN candidates should be turned into an issue by opposition parties in a state that practices a federation concept such as Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here last night for a three-day visit to Sabah, said the BN component parties contesting in the state election would form a strong government unlike certain parties whose candidates were merely out for the fun of becoming a "Yang Berhormat" (right honourable).

Mentioning PAS as an example, he said the party was contesting in six state constituencies this time eventhough it knew that it would not get the support of the people.

"Can it form a government if it wins six seats," he asked.

If they are only interested in being called "Yang Berhormat", he suggested that they changed their names to "Yang Berhormat" so that they will be called that name for all their lives.

Dr Mahathir said he would also "monitor" representatives of the people from the BN to ensure that they really served the people.

"Please let me know if there are those who shirk their duties," he said.

He said the federal government could not be faulted for the reduced financial allocations to Sabah if the state is governed by the opposition.

Dr Mahathir said certain quarters had claimed the government was not being fair in not considering the needs of the people just due its refusal

to cooperate with the PBS.

"We did consider the needs of the people but when we provide the assistance, the PBS will claim that it could still obtain allocations despite being in the opposition," he said.

"So, we only give to the BN government in Sabah. We will not help the opposition since we do not receive any assistance from them."

Dr Mahathir said the people in Sabah should vote for the BN as the state needed a state government that could work closely with the federal government.

He said PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan and Harris had themselves admitted the need for close cooperation with the federal government but the federal government does not need to cooperate with them as they are not in the BN.

He said the BN already has a government in Sabah which is easier for it to cooperate with.

"Only a BN government in Sabah can work closely and effectively with the federal government. The PBS, Bersekutu and other parties are unlikely to be able to do it," said Dr Mahathir.

On the economic crisis, he said the government measures implemented have successfully put the country's economy on the track to recovery.

"The economy is beginning to see growth again but this did not come about by itself. The recovery is due to the measures implemented by the BN government such as in maintaining the value of the ringgit," he said.

If the government had not been efficient, the country could have faced a far serious problem with businesses in the country going bankrupt, he added.

Among those present at the function were Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok as well as BN candidates in the state election - Datuk Wilfred Bumburing (Tamparuli), Datuk Hajiji Mohd Noor (Sulaman) and Datuk Gisin Lombut (Kiulu).

Dr Mahathir later left for Friday prayers at the Kawang district mosque, about 60km from here.

-- BERNAMA

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