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Mahathir-BN

MAHATHIR CONFIDENT BN CAN REGAIN KELANTAN

KOTA BAHARU, July 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said two key factors have reinforced his conviction that the Barisan Nasional (BN) will regain control of Kelantan from PAS in the coming general election.

One factor was the prevailing unity among Umno members in the state and the other, full participation in the party of former members of the now-defunct parti Melayu Semangat 46.

"I reckon we'll win this time, Insyallah (God willing). Unless a catastrophe occurs, I'm confident the BN can win in Kelantan," he said at a press conference here today at the end of a two-day working visit to Kelantan.

Reporters asked Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and BN chairman, about BN chances of wresting away Kelantan which the coalition lost to the opposition since the 1990 general election.

"The strong cooperation among Umno members and the absence of differences ...all these reinforce the possibility of a BN victory in Kelantan," he said citing the basis of his optimism.

Dr Mahathir said during his visit this time around he observed that much change had evolved in Kelantan, especially more spirited supporters and members of the ruling coalition, Umno in particular.

He said not only were they more zealous and prepared in facing the general election but they also had good grasp of the measures that the government was implementing for the nation's good.

"There's no problem...the people understand the government's policies and all are in unison in delivering victory for the BN," he said.

The Prime Minister said the problems being faced by Umno in Kelantan centered on the attitude of PAS members and supporters who had a closed mind as they were not allowed to read newspapers other than the party organ "Harakah".

They were permitted to hear only the speeches of PAS leaders, he said.

"They are so afraid that PAS members after listening to the explanations from Umno and the Government will change their stand."

"Thus we find PAS members idolising their leaders and being oblivious to realities," he said.

Umno would continue to repeat its explanations on what was the truth as part of its strategy to face the situation in Kelantan.

"When they hurl slander at us...we will expose their lies...but when their people do not at all want to read...listen to the truth...it will be difficult indeed," he said.

Asked about mud-slinging among political parties, Dr Mahathir said, "We don't sling mud, only PAS slings mud. We don't sling mud, we tell the truth, very clean truth...no slinging mud from Umno. Umno is not in the business of slinging mud, only PAS slings mud."

He said if PAS members would only open their eyes, ears and hearts then he was certain that no one would support the party.

"Muslims for instance cannot support PAS for no person had humiliated the Almighty as PAS leaders have done. I cannot think of any Muslim who will accept the PAS claim that profanities were allowed in the religion such as those found in the book "Shit."

"Even the word 'shit' I searched in the Quran and it is not there....." he said when referring to the claim by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik

Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that profanities like that written by Datuk Shanon Ahmad were allowed.

Dr Mahathir also denied Opposition allegations that he accumulated wealth during his leadership of the country.

The Prime Minister said he had never taken for himself the many gifts including gold and cars presented to him but had instead donated them to the government and Umno.

"People have given me scores of cars," he said.

All these gifts were on show at a gallery in Langkawi, he added.

He considered the gifts presented to him as Prime Minister and not as an individual.

Dr Mahathir said that in Kuala Lumpur he used the Proton car and had even been to official functions in the Perodua Kancil and not in luxury cars.

He also denied that he had helped his son in business.

"I do not have to help my children. They know how to do business. They are not that stupid. They are not complete idiots," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA

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