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Mahathir-Chinese

MAHATHIR ASKS CHINESE TO RETURN BN WITH 2/3 MAJORITY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today asked the Chinese community to return the governing Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition and ensure it retain two-thirds majority in the coming general election so that it can carry on with measures crucial to economic recovery.

This called for their strong support for BN candidates, including those fielded by the MCA, said Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman and Umno president.

He noted that a small segment of the Chinese community was generally inclined to support the opposition for so-called political balance.

"This inclination may cause an +over balance+ resulting in the BN being denied two-thirds majority in parliament," Dr Mahathir said when opening the 46th MCA general assembly at Wisma MCA here.

A BN government weakened by a reduced majority would not be able to carry out measures crucial to national economic recovery, he said.

"The government needs to be strong to protect the economy," he said.

The prime minister said it was incumbent on MCA to see to it that the party enjoyed solid support from the Chinese in the coming general election.

On his part he pledged Umno's full support for MCA and other BN candidates.

"And I believe MCA will also do likewise," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was fully convinced of MCA's determination and commitment towards ensuring BN's success by according the coalition undivided cooperation and loyalty.

"Much still needs to be done to develop our Malaysia. Toward this end only the Barisan Nasional can accomplish the task," he said.

The prime minister said the BN's success formula since Independence hinged on the spirit of mutual cooperation and help upheld by its component parties.

"The momen we decide on a candidate, we close ranks and lend support regardless of which component party the candidate comes from," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN formula had proved to be hugely successful that it had prompted others to try to copy it.

He said he learnt that the opposition had already formed an alliance but such a seasonal pact only emerged on the eve of general elections.

"While they claim they will come up with a manifesto for the future, we know that it is only a delusion for the electorate. They'll agree to anything to win the general election," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that after the polls, "whether they win or lose, they'll ignore their manifesto."

Such was the case in the 1995 general election when PAS "forgot" about its promise to (the now-defunct) Parti Melayu Semangat 46 about slotting the Kelantan Deputy Menteri Besar post to a S46 leader, he said.

The prime minister said PAS had no qualms about abandoning its cause to set up an Islamic state just to secure DAP's support in the coming general election.

"Will PAS totally drop its pursuit for an "Islamic state" should the party win?" he asked.

As for the DAP, he said the party was trying to revive the "Malaysian Malaysia" concept which PAS endorsed.

"Will the DAP be sincere enough to retain special treatment for Bumiputera?" the prime minister asked again.

Dr Mahathir also criticised Keadilan (the National Justice Party) and Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) for willing to support anything to win votes.

"Can such an alliance form the government?" he asked to a thunderous applause from more than 2,000 MCA delegates and observers.

Later, when speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said the BN was confident of securing Chinese votes in the coming polls.

"We are very confident, perhaps more confident than before," he said when asked how confident was the BN in securing the Chinese votes.

Dr Mahathir said he based his confidence on the Chinese being convinced of the soundness and success of government measures to revive the economy.

"Chinese are very pragmatic people. They understand. They are not moved too much by emotions, unlike Malay voters who are very emotional," he said.

Asked how important was the Chinese votes to the BN, Dr Mahathir said they have always been important to the BN.

Reporters also asked the prime minister to elaborate on his observation of the tendency of some Chinese to support and vote for the opposition for "political balance".

Dr Mahathir said the BN found that some among the Chinese electorate reasoned that the opposition was worth supporting although at the same time they would want the BN to rule.

"While wanting to strike a balance between the strength of the government and the opposition they may cause an overbalance, that is tilting more towards the opposition," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this trend was characteristic of urban Chinese electorate who voted for opposition representatives.

"This puts them (the Chinese) at a disadvantage when they are being represented by the opposition," he said.

"I'm advising them that if they think that the BN can give good service, they should support the BN and have no need to try to strike a balance between the opposition and the BN," he said.

On Malay support for the BN, Dr Mahathir said there was a minority of them who were influenced by opposition instigations and lies.

"But we'll handle this situation by way of explanation," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also attended the assembly opening.

-- BERNAMA

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