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Mahathir-PAS

PAS ONLY STRIVES TO WEAKEN UMNO, SAYS MAHATHIR

ALOR SETAR, March 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that PAS can only be seen to be striving to undermine Umno's strength in the coming general election.

He said PAS wanted to ensure that Umno only form a weak government and if this plan materialise, it would help achieve the goal of other quarters to see a weak government in Malaysia which would then be unable to have a strong voice.

"At present, the Barisan Nasional (BN) government has a two-third majority in parliament and we can have a strong voice because we know that the people are behind us.

"But PAS is striving to weaken this support," he said at a news conference after speaking at a gathering of government officers, imams and penghulus in the state, at Wisma Darul Aman, here.

Dr Mahathir, who ended his two-day visit today, was asked on the PAS threat to Umno in the coming election.

He said that PAS knew that it was not capable of forming a government in the country.

"They can only succeed in Kelantan...even then, its position is now shaky due to various problems," he said.

On PAS' claims that the party would be able to capture several states in the coming general election, Dr Mahathir said that PAS could make its own claims and speculations.

"If we observe carefully, PAS has been making all kinds of projections...the party able to win here and there...," he said.

Asked to comment on his visit to Kedah, Dr Mahathir said he observed that the support of the people for the government was still strong even though there were groups of people who were naturally anti-establishment.

When asked whether the visit was an indication that the general election would be held soon, he said: "There are 13 states and two federal territories to be visited and that takes time."

Dr Mahathir also said that PAS also tended to make loose interpretation with regards to religion because when it suits its political interest, the party would set aside its religious interest.

This could be seen from the support given by PAS to Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail to contest in the election whereas the party rejects women as leaders, he said.

Dr Mahathir said PAS frequently stated that women cannot contest in elections because if they win, they would be leading the men.

"But, on the other hand, they gave their strong support when Wan Azizah expressed her intention to contest (in the election)," he said.

Wan Azizah, the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has set up the Social Justice Movement (Adil). Press reports quoted her as saying that she would not dismiss the possibility of contesting in the Kubang Pasu parliamentary constituency in the coming general election.

Dr Mahathir is the Member of Parliament for Kubang Pasu.

-- BERNAMA

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