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Mahathir-Sabah (Opposition)

PM CAUTIONS VOTERS AGAINST OPPOSITION HATE CAMPAIGN

KOTA KINABALU, March 11 (Bernama) -- On the eve of polling for the Sabah election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has appealed to the people of Sabah not to be influenced by the hate campaign preached by opposition parties.

Speaking at a press conference at the end of his third visit to Sabah within a month, Dr Mahathir accused Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) and Bersekutu of using hate talks to get votes.

"This has been the manner in which they have been campaigning ...they preached hatred against the federal government and against me.

"I hope Sabahans will not be influenced by the hate campaign and sentiments created by PBS, PAS and Bersekutu as it will not contribute to their well-being of the people and the state," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who appeared in good spirits before leaving for Kuala Lumpur, said because of their hate campaign, the opposition parties had failed to focus on how to improve the lives of the people and develop Sabah.

The prime minister again expressed confidence that the Barisan Nasional (BN) would be returned to power at the polls.

Before the news conference, Dr Mahathir was in Kudat on an election campaign trail for BN candidates and had to cancel a similar trip to Ranau because of bad weather.

Asked if it had been a very exhaustive campaign for him, he said he himself was very much involved in the campaigning although he had passed on that responsibility to his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"But because my deputy has just taken over the role, I have decided to help him out.

"Although I have a lot of work to do, I decided to help him and thus I have been very much involved because of the circumstances," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir asked the 726,000-odd voters in the state to re-evaluate the BN against the opposition parties and decide for themselves which would be better for them.

"We want to serve the people of Sabah and develop the state whereas the opposition could only incite hatred and portray the BN leaders as 'orang jahat' (mischievous people)," he said.

The prime minister also agreed with a journalist's assertion that the issue in the current Sabah election was very much about "development versus sentiments".

He also commented that many ex-PBS leaders were now in the BN as they realised that only the BN could deliver its promises for the development of Sabah.

"They have left the PBS because when they were in the party, they had found out the PBS was not able to do much for the people of Sabah. They were disappointed and because of that they left," he said.

On constituencies with majority Kadazandusun voters, Dr Mahathir said many Kadazandusuns had begun to understand and appreciate the BN and that would mean less votes for PBS, which controlled such seats in all elections since 1985.

Asked about the "missing RM4 billion" from the Sabah Foundation which he himself first raised in the 1994 state election, Dr Mahathir again said he was in the dark as to where the money had gone to.

"We knew there was a lot of money in the state because of Sabah's wealth but when the BN took over the reins of government in 1994, there was no money. Where has the money gone to? This is what we want to know," he said.

Dr Mahathir also congratulated all the political parties and their supporters for the peaceful manner they had been conducting their electoral campaigns.

He was pleased that there had been no ugly situations like a confrontation between rival supporters nor had anyone been reported beaten or injured as a result of the intense campaigning.

He also said the BN spirit among the various component parties was good, citing the case of Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee being present in the north-eastern town of Kudat today to help fellow BN candidate, Datuk Chong Kah Kiat of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The prime minister said Umno members were also in all the 48 constituencies to help BN candidates irrespective of their party affiliation.

On federal financial allocations to state, Dr Mahathir said Sabah under an opposition government could not achieve much even if it was to be given funds by the federal government.

"We will provide money when we know the government can make use of the money .. but the opposition has never been able to administer the state properly, even if they had money," he added.

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