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PM: Opposition will use dirty tactics in polls

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the next general election would be the dirtiest yet as the opposition would use all kinds of threats and instigation aided by foreign manipulators and the foreign media.

The election would be dirtier as the opposition had sanctioned words that were vulgar, crude, dirty, distasteful and obscene, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the opposition had already used dirty tactics in their ceramah.

He said this when opening the annual general assembly of the People's Progressive Party at Pusat Islam.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional would not copy the methods of the opposition and ask for the help of foreigners, foreign nations, foreign powers or the foreign media.

"We believe in the people of the country and they are the ones who will decide our fate and their own as they will be choosing the Government that will lead them.

"We believe the citizens of this country are of races who are proud of their freedom and they will choose a party that is free from the manipulation of foreign powers. And the party that is free in Malaysia is only the Barisan Nasional."

Dr Mahathir said the BN had an excellent record, had brought about development and comfort in the country and had broken the assault on our economy by foreigners.

The economy and the social and political aspects of the country were defended by the country's own strength and energy, he said.

Later at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said there were indications that the next general election would be the dirtiest due to what was said by the opposition.

"Firstly, Nik Aziz (head of Pas consultative council Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat) has sanctioned abuse and cursing people.

"This can be done by them. Also we find that supporters of the opposition are those who have been involved in demonstrations last year and I am sure they will use force to achieve their aims."

He said there were many other indications.

Dr Mahathir gave an assurance that neither the Government nor the BN would play dirty and the people would be asked to consider what was good for them and the country.

He said it was seen that the foreign media always supported the opposition and condemned the Government and its leaders.

"I am said to be a dictator who has assaulted (former Deputy Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Anwar (Ibrahim) and made false accusations against him.

"This gives rise to hatred against the Government and myself," Dr Mahathir said.

"We will try to keep the peace in the country but doing that is now a problem as the foreign media and their TV crews follow the police.

"If the police are beaten by demonstrators, that is not shown.

"Instead if the police use a little force to calm the situation, they use the scene to show the whole world ... with the objective to tarnish our image."

He said this had been going on for some time.

Dr Mahathir said tourists and investors would then stay away.

"The opposition is using the foreign media to attack us.

"Read and see if they have anything good to say about us.

"The foreign media has accused me of being a dictator who has supplied hundreds of millions of dollars to (South African President) Nelson Mandela for the ANC election (campaign). I am a dictator. That is to dirty my image so that I will not win.

"So, the foreign media works for the opposition. If the local media wants to support the opposition, we cannot stop it. Quite a lot of them are supporting the opposition, some of them are illegal papers."

He said nothing could be dirtier than messages appearing on the Internet.

He said there was no reason for the opposition to accuse the BN of being dirty as the opposition was the one that was dirty.

Asked how long the campaign period would be for the next election, he said it should not be too long because during the 1969 election there was a long campaigning period and tensions built up and in the end there were racial riots.

Asked if only Malays could become Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said:

"There is no such provision in the Constitution."

When asked about his views on the matter, he said he would also follow the Constitution.

Present at the Press conference were PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob, who is also Information Minister.

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