

12/03/1999

Simple majority within reach of BN, says PM

Jaswinder Kaur

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a simple majority was within the reach of the Barisan Nasional in the State election which begins tomorrow.

Speaking at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport, the BN chairman and Prime Minister said there was also an even chance of BN securing more than a simple majority.

"There is an even chance that we will have more than a simple majority but certainly a simple majority will be with the BN."

When asked if there was any indication that the prediction could go wrong, the Prime Minister said:

"Some people may do something in the last minute, I would not know.

"There are certain people who are able to persuade other people and identity cards may go missing.

"Some people do these things ... if this happens, we may not do well."

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that the people of Sabah were not influenced by sentiments of hatred spread by Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) and, to a lesser extent, by Pas and Bersekutu.

He said these parties did not have anything to offer Sabah and were only out to sow hatred among the people towards the BN, the Federal Government and himself (Dr Mahathir).

"They have accused me of getting land in Keningau and this is their way of campaigning. They do not concentrate on the betterment of the people of Sabah or towards the development of the State ... Instead they spread sentiments of hatred," he said.

When asked if this election could be described as a "fight between development versus sentiments", Dr Mahathir said the BN aimed to develop and provide services for the good of the State and the people.

"The Opposition only wants to raise sentiments of hatred. If they raise sentiments like 'love Sabah', it would be all right. They said I took Labuan but Harris (Datuk Harris Salleh) gave Labuan away so that it could be developed.

"With the development of Labuan, whoever owns property on the island will gain profits," he said.

On the resignation of PBS Bingkor divisional head Datuk Lawrence Gimbang today and his pledge of support to the BN, Dr Mahathir said many BN leaders were formerly in PBS.

"They left PBS because they were aware that PBS could not help the people of Sabah and could not develop the State ... They were disappointed and left PBS for BN," he said.

Asked if the acid test would be the Kadazandusun majority areas, Dr Mahathir said he was confident that many Kadazandusun people were now with the BN and supportive of the party.

The Prime Minister said he was of the opinion that the Kadazandusun community would give less votes to PBS this time.

On allocations to opposition-held States, Dr Mahathir said:

"We will provide money when we know the Government can make use of the money. But it has already been proven that the opposition Government has never been able to administer the State properly.

"Even if they have the money, they cannot develop it. So, we will have to resign ourselves to the fact that the rest of Malaysia will achieve Vision 2020 but Sabah under an opposition Government will not."

He also described BN components in Sabah as "very good", and that during his visit to Kudat, Sabah Progressive Party president Datuk Yong Teck Lee was there, although the BN candidate for Kudat was Liberal Democratic Party president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat.

"Of course Umno was also there. Umno is present in all 48 constituencies to support all candidates.

"Even in areas where there is a Muslim majority, but the candidate is not (a Muslim), Umno will still support," he said.

(END)