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We need a big win, says Dr M

Ramlan Said

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - The Barisan Nasional needs a two-thirds majority in Parliament as only a strong government can defend the sovereignty of the nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the absence of peace and unity could cause the nation to suffer the fate of some countries which had governments replaced or territories seeking independence.

"I fear the same thing will happen to us if we are not united and don't have a strong government capable of defending the country," he told about 100 leaders from the national ex-servicemen association who called on him at the Prime Minister's Department.

The members, led by association president Datuk Mohamad Ghani and secretary-general Datuk Yassin Noor, later pledged their support to Dr Mahathir and the Barisan Nasional in the general election.

The association has 200,000 members.

Dr Mahathir said a two-thirds majority was also essential to ensuring the BN's position was not easily threatened.

He said the 42 years of independence would be meaningless if efforts were not made to defend its sovereignty.

"To ensure our continued independence, we need unity and peace in the country. Without these, we will fail," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians would succeed if they were disciplined, confident of their ability and realised that their main objectives were to defend the nation's independence.

Citing the Armed Forces as an example, Dr Mahathir said discipline was vital in efforts to develop the country.

Praising former and present Armed Forces staff for their commitment and sacrifice, the Prime Minister said the country was especially indebted to them for the success in overcoming the communist insurgency.

Dr Mahathir said the army's success in defeating the communists had won it the admiration of former South African president Nelson Mandela.

"He praised our ability in defeating a guerilla movement, which according to him is something that can never be achieved. I explained to him that our success was because of our brave and disciplined armed forces whose members are willing to endanger their lives in protecting the country."

Dr Mahathir hoped that the association would convey the Government's aspirations in bringing progress to the people and its members.

Dr Mahathir said he could not understand why certain people were angry with him and the Government and were spreading lies like calling him a cruel person.

"I admit that I am not perfect but we have to see whether there is any truth in these claims. The Government has not done anything to cause problems to the people. Instead it strives to help the rakyat."

Alluding to the Prime Minister's Department complex which some claimed was extravagant, Dr Mahathir said it was not built for him alone but for the use of the country's future prime ministers.

He said the Government had always spent within its limits and had not resorted to borrowing.

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