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Mahathir-PPP

BN TO CONSIDER PPP'S REQUEST TO CONTEST IN GENERAL ELECTIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he will try to give due consideration to the request by the People's Progressive Party, one of the 14 Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties, to contest in the general elections.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said that he would consider the demands made by the PPP, whose high spirits never waned despite not being in the top government leadership or fielded to represent the BN in the elections for a long time.

"I am fully aware that the PPP works very hard in general elections and by-elections...this is appreciated by the BN," he said when opening the PPP's 47th general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

Commenting on the request by PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas in his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said it was appropriate that the BN consider the demand to be fielded made by the PPP.

Dr Mahathir, who received overwhelming response throughout his speech from the 4,000 delegates and observers present, said that the BN recorded its appreciation to all PPP members who strive to achieve the BN's objectives and aspirations.

"Even though the PPP appears small, it is no longer small...nobody can deny the determined efforts and role played by all the PPP members and nobody can deny the position of the PPP as a vital component in the BN," he said.

He said that in the BN, the level of all component parties was the same, irrespective of whether it has a large membership or not, big or small, as long as emphasis was placed on the objectives of the party's struggle as a BN component party.

"The question of a component party being marginalised does not arise just because it does not have representation in the government top level or at the state assembly or parliament levels," he said.

Answering questions at a news conference later, Dr Mahathir said he could not make a decision on his own on the seat allocation for the PPP and needed to do "some haggling and try to think of something".

He said the BN could not simply create parliamentary seats just for the PPP but could look at the redelineation exercise of constituencies. "But that too had not been thought of yet," he said.

Meanwhile, Kayveas among others said that the PPP, which had always worked hard for the BN victory, was still waiting for recognition by the BN through an allocation of seat in the elections.

Kayveas said that without any seat allocated to it like the other component parties, the PPP was like a citizen but only with permanent resident status and as a component party, the PPP had the right to be reallocated seats the party had previously won.

He said that the PPP which has 110 divisions active in nine states with a membership of 300,000, was identifying seats it could contest and would submit its request to the BN top leadership soon.

In his speech which covered a wide range of topics including economy, politics and education, he called on the government to give priority to the teaching of information technology (IT) in schools so that Malaysia would not in future depend on foreign expertise in the field.

He also called on the government to provide special incentives in the 2001 Budget to attract Malaysians embarking on the IT field abroad to

return home.

At the function, Dr Mahathir also launched the new PPP logo.

Among those present were MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat and representatives of other BN component parties.

-- BERNAMA

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