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Mahathir-Malays

MAHATHIR BRUSHES ASIDE SUGGESTIONS THAT THE MALAYS ARE UNITING UNDER PAS

By: E.Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 27 (Bernama) -- Shrugging off suggestions that the Malays are uniting under PAS, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the so-called Islamic opposition party has only managed to instill hatred among the community towards the government.

"I don't think they are uniting under PAS," he said when responding to reports in the foreign media recently that Umno could not carry the Malay vote in the recent Lunas state by-election won by Parti Keadilan Nasional's Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Bernama at the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya yesterday, the Umno president said PAS had been successful in causing the Malays to hate the government because of their hate campaign which he said had gone on for the past 30 over years.

"When people hate, then they do not see reason anymore," he said.

He said PAS even told the Malays that they must not be grateful to anybody who gave them something.

Dr Mahathir said that while the government was helping the Malays to get better education and to become professionals, PAS was urging them not to be grateful to the government.

PAS was telling them that what the government was doing for them was their right, he said.

The prime minister said this kind of "teaching" by PAS had influenced the thinking of the (Malay) youth.

During the hour-long interview, Dr Mahathir was also asked about the reasons for Barisan Nasional's (BN) narrow defeat in the Lunas by-election and the problems in Umno.

Asked if the top leadership was to blame for any problems in Umno, he admitted that he was responsible for any failure in the party.

"Ultimately, I am responsible. But if anything happens, there is not just one reason. There are numerous reasons," he said.

Citing the BN's defeat in Lunas, Dr Mahathir said Umno was "very weak" in that state constituency because in any constituency where the candidate was never a Malay or an Umno man, the party was weak.

In cases where Umno was fielding its candidate, the party was strong.

Dr Mahathir also said that there were "weaknesses in the organisation" coupled with the Vision School controversy.

There were many factors which led to the BN's defeat in Lunas and the BN hoped to correct them, he added.

Asked if the defeat was also due to the lack of coordination among the component parties, Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, agreed, saying that there was very poor local support in terms of arranging talks.

"And of course the opposition actually "flooded" Lunas with outsiders, something like three or four times the population of Lunas," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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