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Mahathir-Teluk Kemang

OPPOSITION RESORTING TO RACIAL ISSUES

By: Ghazemy Mahmud

TOKYO, June 12 (Bernama) -- Racial issues played by the opposition was among the factors for the reduced majority achieved by the Barisan Nasional in the Teluk Kemang parliamentary by election on Saturday, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Describing the opposition tactic as unhealthy, the Prime Minister said the opposition candidate for Teluk Kemang in the past came from the DAP and usually a Chinese or an Indian and thus religion and racial issues could not be played there.

"This time we faced an opponent from Parti Keadilan and they raised issues about wanting temples or mosques built and I am sure this has an effect too," he told a press conference at the end of his week-long working visit to Japan.

"Pig farming in Lukut was also turned into an issue. Although we have gone out of our way in paying compensation, which in other countries such a move is usually not taken and we paid almost full compensation, but the DAP still played on the issues to turn the people against the government."

"So, we need to look into why there was a reduced majority and I am confident we can overcome it."

Dr Mahathir said the by election was different from the general election as the DAP would not normally give up a constituency it had contested in before to Keadilan.

On racial politics, he said: "It is unhealthy but the opposition has no qualms about it such as when it needs to cooperate with the DAP, it is willing to even embrace the DAP and when an opportunity arises to play on religion among the Malays, it will exploit that too".

On the dissolution of a number of Keadilan branches and the entry of its members into Umno, he said: "I feel they will come to a realisation sooner or later, some earlier and some later".

"Our country is now under attack and there are efforts being made to take over our economy so as to force us to kowtow to foreign powers as had been done to some other countries," said Dr Mahathir.

"Malays should thus close ranks and support the government in thwarting these attacks but they seem to be too taken up with squabbling among themselves and in calling people as being more Islamic or less Islamic and the sort."

He said: "Things like these only make us weak and in the end the country would be taken over by foreigners".

"We see these things happening in front of us but we may think it will not happen to us," said Dr Mahathir.

"It did not happen now because, by the grace of God, we have a strong government. But, if attempts were made to weaken the government, then a weak government is unlikely to be able to defend the independence of our country."

He said Malaysia's success in managing its finances was not a coincidence but due to the implementation of an efficient and effective policy.

Dr Mahathir said this success has enabled the country to speak freely and it need not bow to any party.

"Malaysia was able to quickly revive its economy because it was not burdened by debts," he said.

He said the government's policy of pre-paying its loans before maturity from time to time has resulted in a lower national debt.

He said to be highly in debt without weighing the future risks involved could result in a country being re-colonised.

Dr Mahathir said projects implemented by the government were based on the country's financial ability.

"We may have mega projects but we built them with our own money," he said.

On claims by car dealers that they have been badly affected by the withdrawal of commissions paid for introducing buyers to financial institutions, he said: "we will listen to the views of all concerned and if there is a case, the decision may be reviewed".

-- BERNAMA

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