

29 JUN 2001

Mahathir-Permatang Pauh

BN SUPPORTERS AND MALAY ELECTORATE IN PERMATANG PAUH HAVE CHANGED

BUKIT MERTA JAM, June 29 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is convinced that the Malay electorate and Barisan Nasional (BN) voters in opposition-held Permatang Pauh here are increasingly committed towards the government.

Their attitude towards the government was gradually changing and they were more spirited in pursuing the cause of the race, religion and country as compared to that during the 1999 general election, he said.

"In 1999, the matter (the expulsion of then Permatang Pauh MP Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the government and Umno) has just taken place and disappointed many people as they do not know what actually happened," he said.

Speaking to reporters here today at the end of his two-day visit to Penang, Dr Mahathir said the Malay electorate and BN supporters appeared to have changed their attitude and their way of discussing as well as of raising questions over the issue.

This proved that their perceptions and thoughts had also changed upon being getting clarification and explanation relating to the issue, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, urged party division chiefs in the constituency to set aside their differences over the issue and those arising from the recent divisional elections.

In the 1999 general election, Umno lost Permatang Pauh to Parti Keadilan Nasional president and Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail.

"Umno leaders there should instead concentrate on the party struggle relating to the race, religion and country," said Dr Mahathir.

Although, accomplishments in bringing about progress to the nation were already heartening, the Umno struggle for religion was still being distorted by the opposition, he said.

"The struggle for Malay advancement has yet to bring about the desired and satisfactory results. We have not yet been able to secure the 30 per cent stake in the national economy as sought for under the New Economic Policy. As such we have to do much more to eradicate poverty especially among the Malays," he said.

On his visit to Penang this time around, the prime minister said he was satisfied with the solid and serious support expressed by BN component party leaders.

This exemplified their determination to perpetuate the Umno and BN cause which augured well for the future of the ruling coalition, the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

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