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Leaders stress on unity, changes

FOR Barisan Nasional component party leaders, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's keynote address is a timely reminder to continue with activities which benefit the community.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said BN was the only party that symbolised the "true sense of unity".

He said BN as the government of the day must continue to carry out development efforts as a responsibility towards the people and the nation.

"Development cannot be stopped because of certain quarters who are ungrateful to the BN-led government for the developments so far.

"I believe the majority of the rakyat who truly understand and want to enjoy the nation's development will appreciate them."

Abdullah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, said only the BN represented true unity with close co-operation among the 13 component parties.

He also believed that the people's confidence towards BN would increase in years to come.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the BN leadership needed to identify the changes taking place in the community and adapt to remain relevant.

"BN now is not like BN 10 years ago or the Alliance 50 years ago. We need to keep up with the changes," said Dr Ling, who is also Transport Minister.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said it was important for BN component parties to be united in facing challenges posed by opposition parties.

"We in MIC will play our part to further strengthen the coalition and gain the people's support.

"It has been proven that BN is the only coalition that could safeguard the interests of the people."

MIC secretary-general S. Sothinathan said the BN component parties should act in the same spirit and maintain close "brotherhood ties".

"We have many challenges to face at present and these could only be overcome if we work together as a single entity."

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said it was important for BN party leaders to recognise the changes among the younger Malaysians.

"BN party leaders should play their role in educating the younger generation and convincing them of our struggle."

Another Umno vice-president, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, said he agreed with Dr Mahathir that the Opposition was fanning racial sentiments.

"The Memali and Sauk arms heists are among the examples," said Najib, who is Defence Minister.

MCA vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng said Dr Mahathir had laid out the perspectives for the years ahead and it would be up to every component party to create a sense of security among their followers to arrive at a stage where there was only one party for Malaysians.

"The people want to have a party that truly represents the aspirations of everyone and not the aspirations of particular groups."

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said BN's policies were the proven way of life for Malaysians which were being threatened by the unscrupulous tactics of Pas.

He said as described by Dr Mahathir, Pas was trying to confuse the

people with different policies for separate communities.

"BN must ensure that our way of life is defended. We must go back to the basics by continuing to work hard and making sacrifices to show we are united."

Gerakan vice-president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said BN must work hard to close the gap with the younger generation.

"The BN leadership must understand the aspirations and feelings of the young people."

The BN, he said, must go back to basics of politics which was to serve the people with emphasis on integrity, accountability and efficiency.

"We must reaffirm this commitment as only then can we move forward without losing our future supporters," he said.

MIC vice-president Datuk S. Veerasingam said BN must not only work as a team but be seen as working as one.

He also said more efforts must be taken to consolidate unity in the coalition as it would help counter the Opposition's propaganda.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said Dr Mahathir's speech showed that he had always been pragmatic in his actions by saying that the approach towards the younger generation should be based on their aspirations.

"We have to formulate new ideas and approaches to attract the young to appreciate BN's struggle and the development it has brought."

He said in line with the Prime Minister's call to have closer co-operation among the component parties, a working committee comprising Youth leaders had been set up two months ago to discuss sensitive issues such as Malay rights and good corporate governance.

"We sit down and discuss matters openly and come up with suggestions so that we will be able to work together and understand each other better."

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