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Mahathir-Equality

MAHATHIR CONFIDENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BALANCE WILL BE ACHIEVED

KOTA KINABALU, May 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will continue to strive for a more balanced distribution of political and economic powers among the various races in the country.

However, until such balance is reached, the bumiputeras, with their political power, and the non-bumiputeras, with their economic power, should not grab everything for their own race, he said.

"Maybe the distribution of economic wealth and political power is still not balanced among the races but efforts are still continuing and I believe that in the end the distribution of economic wealth and political power will be more balanced," he said at the Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) special assembly here.

In his one-hour address before 2,000 people at the assembly, Dr Mahathir stressed that one of the reasons Malaysia continued to be strong was the attitude of its people who valued unity despite their different levels of economic and political achievement.

"Although they have political power, they (the bumiputeras) do not seize others' rights just because they have the power. In the economic field, although the non-bumiputeras are more efficient, they are prepared to give opportunities to the bumiputeras," he said.

For example, he said, although in theory the bumiputeras and Umno could form the government on their own, they did not do so and instead chose to form a coalition government with the other races.

"With this, everyone is comfortable and there is no feeling of suspicion that the government oppresses the non-bumiputeras...so also with the economy, the non-bumiputeras do not oppose the New Economic Policy that was created to help the bumiputeras," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "It is better to have a portion of the big thing than the whole of a small thing, or worse still, the whole of nothing."

"In the spirit of tolerance, the winner does not take all and the loser does not lose all," he said.

The cooperation among the various races, which was the foundation of the Barisan Nasional's strength, was proven in the existence of the 13 racial-based BN component parties after the dissolution of Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat today, he said.

"With these 13 parties, we scored a big victory with over two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat and were able to form a strong government," he said.

With this big number of component parties, the BN would remain strong even if some parties were to withdraw, he said.

"If Umno were to leave, of course the BN will fall, but Umno will also fall in the end. As such, we cannot leave the BN although we are a big party," he said.

He also said that the BN always strove to give positions to leaders of parties representing the minorities.

He said, for example, that when Akar did not have a seat, the BN appointed its president, Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia, as a senator and then to the cabinet as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

-- BERNAMA

JS JK