

14 JULY 2001

Mahathir-Likas

OPPOSITION CANNOT FORGE GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THEMSELVES

PUTRAJAYA, July 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today opposition parties cannot forge a good working relationship among them as they usually enter into a "marrigae of convenience" during a general election and part ways when the elections is over.

The Prime Minister said the pact between the component parties of Barisan Nasional have always remained intact with only "one marriage and no divorce".

"The opposition has no pact, they only enter into marriages of convenience when the election approaches, after that it's divorce of convenience, and then they marry again.

"If we marry and divorce, marry and divorce then the relationship will not be good," he told reporters after chairing the third session of the 2002 pre-budget dialogue at the Prime Minister's office here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman was asked to comment on the failure of the opposition to field a candidate in the Likas state by-election on July 21.

The Likas state by-election will see a four-cornered fight between BN candidate Datuk Yong Teck Lee, Dr Chong Eng Leong from Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), woman candidate Liew Chin Jin from Parti Keadilan Nasional and independent candidate, Kong Yun Chee.

The opposition tried to reach a pact before this to field one candidate only against the BN in the forthcoming election.

Among the opposition leaders who expressed dissapointment with the four-corner fight are PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who was quoted as saying that the political scenario in the by-election did not reflect the willingness of opposition parties to defeat the BN candidate.

The by-election is being held after the election court ruled that the Likas by-election in 1999 was declared null and void as there were phantom voters among the voters' register.

Dr Mahathir said, BN is still optimistic of winning in Likas as the victory attained in the 1999 state elections was not due to the existence of phantom voters.

"We won before not because of phantom voters. Therefore we hope to win again," he added.

-- BERNAMA
AFY AKT DVS