

Win bodes well

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**It is a positive sign for BN
in next polls, says Mahathir**

ALOR STAR, Sun: A decisive win by the Barisan Nasional in yesterday's Indera Kayangan by-election augurs well for the ruling coalition in facing the next general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

Nevertheless, he said, the BN would not allow itself to be overconfident in the wake of the victory as the Opposition may resort to actions meant to gain public sympathy before the next polls which is due in 2004.

Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said: "Yesterday's victory is a good sign but we should not be overconfident as the Opposition may spark off something during the period leading to the next general election to win sympathy."

He was speaking to reporters at the airport here after attend-

ing an investiture and pledge of allegiance to mark the 74th birthday of the Sultan of Kedah. He was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

Reporters asked Mahathir about the bigger majority secured by BN's Ooi Ah Lan in yesterday's by-election which saw her defeating her Parti Keadilan Nasional challenger Khoo Yang Chong by 2,592 votes.

Ooi polled 4,279 votes and Khoo obtained 1,687. Her majority was 618 votes more than that garnered by the BN in the 1999 general election.

Mahathir said there was noticeable awareness among the electorate of the wisdom of supporting a ruling coalition, be it at the federal or state level, that would deliver them benefits rather than waste their votes on opposition candidates out of sheer frustration.

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What matters now is national development and peace: PM

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"It is now about politics of well-being. What matters to the masses now is national development and peace. It is no longer the time for harping on issues about this or that person being victimised," he said.

Mahathir said the outcome of the Indera Kayangan by-election also showed eroding support and a bleak future for Parti Keadilan.

"A large number of its members and leaders have lost faith in their

party," he said, adding that PAS, which is Keadilan's partner in an opposition alliance, no longer looks at Keadilan as a party that can serve its own agenda.

"We have seen how PAS made use of Keadilan, resulting in PAS having more elected representatives and in PAS unseating the DAP for the position of parliamentary opposition leader," he said.

Mahathir believes that Keadilan members are increasingly aware of the lack of basis for their party's

cause and that more will abandon it.

"Whether they rejoin Umno or not is not important. What is important is not letting themselves be tricked into pursuing the selfish cause of any individual," he said.

Asked about the expressed threat by Keadilan vice-president Azmin Ali during campaigning for the Indera Kayangan by-election that he would disclose the contents of a box of government confidential documents, Mahathir dared Azmin to make good the threat. — Bernama

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