

11 JUL 2002

By-elections-Khalil

UNITY VITAL TO COUNTRY'S WELL-BEING, SAYS KHALIL

PENDANG, July 11 (Bernama) -- Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob has reminded the people to preserve unity, hold fast to religion and remain loyal to the country to ensure the nation's strength.

He said this strength would enable the country to develop without having to beg or borrow money from other countries.

"This is the power that allows the government to develop the country using our own money. Only this will give true meaning to independence," he said at a "kenduri" at the Kampung Sungai Durian surau here today.

The gathering, organised by the Kampung Sungai Durian Viewers, Listeners and Readers Group (K3P), was attended by Kedah Information Department Director Azizan Din and about 100 villagers.

At a press conference later, Khalil dismissed opposition claims that the transition of power in the government and Umno would affect support for the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Support for the BN had remained strong because power transfer was a normal process in the government and party, he said.

"This matter has been announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. It should not be an issue," he said.

Dr Mahathir has said that he would give up his party and government posts in October next year and has named Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his successor.

Khalil also said the BN machinery was all geared up for the Pendang parliamentary and Anak Bukit state by-elections on July 18.

"We have been thorough in our preparation. We are confident of winning because the trend of people's support looks to be in our favour," he said.

He advised voters to ignore the opposition's plea for sympathy votes and instead to pick candidates who can bring development.

The by-elections were caused by the death of PAS president Datuk Haji Fadzil Noor on June 23.

-- BERNAMA

MAN YBY