

27 JUL 2002
Mahathir-Strong
BN PARTIES MUST BE STRONG FOR NATIONAL UNITY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties must be strong to maintain the close ties among the races in the country.

The prime minister said that when the party or leader was weak, they would be easily attracted to extremism to get support and when that happened, the other BN component parties would also resort to racial extremism to fight among themselves.

All this would weaken the BN and enable the opposition parties to win by default, he said.

"Remember, if we have a small minority, we cannot be firm in administering the country. A weak administration cannot tackle racial problems," he said when opening the MCA general assembly, here.

He said that in Malaysia, the opposition parties were radical and intolerant and if they came into power, the country would change as had happened in Kelantan and Terengganu under PAS rule.

"The country will become backward and the people will feel pressured. There'll be no cultural freedom or religious freedom for those who don't share their sentiments," Dr Mahathir, who is also the BN chairman, said.

He said that because of this, the BN could not allow its component parties, especially the big ones, to be weakened by internal misunderstandings and tolerance must be given priority to resolve the problem.

The party had to win, not any one side, and the party would win if priority was given to it and not to the leaders or groups within the party, he said.

He said any dispute among the BN components and their leaders would only allow extremist factions to gain influence and grow.

"Don't think that the BN cannot be defeated. It can be defeated not because the opposition parties are stronger or better but because of the weakness of the BN and its component parties," he said.

He said the opposition had tried to copy the BN concept but were unable to maintain their cooperation because they were extremist parties.

The DAP, he said, had pulled out of the opposition front and Parti Keadilan Nasional and Parti Rakyat Malaysia were there in name only.

"They exist because they can be used by PAS. After they outgrow their usefulness, they will be discarded," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was clear that a coalition like the BN could only be produced from moderate and strong parties.

He also said that his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, should follow tradition in the appointment of members of the cabinet so that all the component parties representing all the races in the country were represented.

"Nothing has been written down about these things in full in our Constitution. It is a tradition we follow. It is a tradition that has enabled us to effect changes in the leadership of the government smoothly, which is important for our stability and prosperity.

"So I hope the MCA will uphold this tradition and give its fullest support to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when he takes over to become the new Prime Minister, the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia," he added.

-- BERNAMA
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