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Clear message from the people (HL)

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - The resounding victory by Barisan Nasional in retaining the Indera Kayangan seat is a good indication of the coalition's chances in the next general election, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The overwhelming mandate showed the people were aware of the importance of supporting a party which could benefit them.

"I'm happy the people realise they should not waste their votes (by polling for the opposition) just because they are angry over something.

"The political situation now is that people want a happy life, development in the country and peace."

He said, adding the people were rational and mature enough and that is why they returned to supporting BN.

However, Dr Mahathir said BN should not be over-confident as the opposition could still try to create issues to gain the people's sympathy.

He said this when asked to comment on BN candidate Oui Ah Lan's victory over Parti Keadilan Nasional's Khoo Yang Chong in the Indera Kayangan by-election yesterday.

Oui won by polling 4,279 votes while Khoo obtained 1,687. Oui's majority was 618 more than what BN secured in the 1999 general election.

Speaking to reporters at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport in Kepala Batas, Dr Mahathir said Keadilan's defeat showed the party could no longer attract the people's support.

He said it also showed Pas could no longer use Keadilan to gain popularity.

"It was because of Keadilan that Pas managed to win more seats in the 1999 general election to the extent it (Pas) became the opposition leader, replacing the DAP.

"Keadilan was used by Pas, which is known for its expertise in doing this," he said, adding that the by-election result also indicated a bleak future for Keadilan.

He said many Keadilan members, including some of its prominent leaders, had lost faith in the party.

"It (Keadilan) is a single issue party ... it is not interested in national development or anything else.

"It just wants justice for one person because they think there was no justice ... you can't have a party that hopes to get national support by expecting people to gamble on their future because of this one issue."

Asked if Umno would use Keadilan members who defected to get more people to leave the opposition, Dr Mahathir said: "We won't use them but we want them to realise what Keadilan is all about."

On allegations that busloads of BN supporters had gone to Indera Kayangan on polling day as phantom voters, Dr Mahathir said the opposition should provide evidence.

"What is their evidence of phantom voters ... show, lah. They can go to court and show. But of course if they lose, they will say the courts are manipulated," he said.

Earlier, the Prime Minister attended an investiture ceremony in conjunction with the Sultan of Kedah's 74th birthday celebration.

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