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Mahathir-BN

DR MAHATHIR REMINDS BN COMPONENTS TO PRACTISE MODERATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reminded Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties representing the various races to be moderate in their approach and not to be influenced by the views of extremist groups.

"We should be rational and not let ourselves be influenced by the views of extremist groups," the Prime Minister said when opening the 49th general assembly of the People's Progressive Party (PP) here today.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said BN component parties should be brave to uphold the truth and make decisions that would benefit all races and not just a single community.

Citing an example of extremists' attempts to hamper government efforts in promoting unity, he said they had accused the government of trying to abolish national-type schools through the Vision School project although it was aimed at encouraging integration among the younger generation.

As such, Dr Mahathir wanted BN parties to be strong and united so that they would not be influenced by extremist groups bent on thwarting government efforts in promoting close ties among the various races.

He said it would be easy for extremist groups to gain support if BN component parties and their leaders were weak and quarrelled among themselves.

"In a system of democracy, majority support determines who forms the government.

"Threats by extremist groups to reduce votes for the ruling party will be used repeatedly if they find that we easily bow to their threats," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although racial ties were now generally very good in Malaysia, there existed a gap among the younger generation in schools and institutions of higher learning, and this did not augur well for the country.

He said racial unity had convinced the colonisers to give the country independence, and measures taken by the government to prevent a recurrence of incidents like the 1969 racial riots had enabled the country to maintain its peace and harmony after the region was attacked by currency speculators.

He also said the government was very firm in handling issues on relations between the races and even though the Bumiputeras had special privileges as enshrined in the Federal Constitution, the government never ignored the rights of the other races.

"The government will continue to protect the rights of other races according to the provisions of the Federal Constitution. But the government also has a duty and responsibility to preserve harmony and unity for the coming generations," he said.

At a news conference later, Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on PPP's proposals that BN be made a single party instead of coalition and that all those born in the country after independence on Aug 31, 1957 be given Bumiputera status.

Dr Mahathir said the views of other component parties on this matter should be sought.

PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas, in his speech earlier, urged the government to consider implementing these proposals to help create a Bangsa Malaysia.

On PPP's request for seats in the next general election following the increase in state and parliamentary seats, Dr Mahathir said: "All parties are asking, not just PPP. We will consider; Umno too is asking for more."

-- BERNAMA

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