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Mahathir-contest

DR MAHATHIR TO GO TO THE GROUND IN NEXT ELECTION

By: S.Retnanathan

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 1 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will go to the ground to give moral support to Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates in the next general election.

As the BN chairman, he said, it was his responsibility to give full support all the BN candidates.

Asked whether he would contest in the next general election, he said he would "under certain circumstances and when necessary".

"I think I will go to the ground. The question is whether I will contest. No matter who contests, it is my duty to give full support to Umno candidates, Barisan Nasional candidates.

Dr Mahathir was interviewed by Bernama Editor-in-Chief Jaafar Hussin and assistant editor E.Sivabalan in the "Wawancara BERNAMA dengan Perdana Menteri" programme aired over RTM and Astro tonight.

Asked whether "going to the ground" could be interpreted to mean that he would be contesting, he said his interest was in seeing the BN win.

"I am 76. The desire to ensure Barisan Nasional's success is there but Barisan Nasional can achieve success even if I do not contest or am no longer the leader.

"This is a possibility but in certain situations if I am required to contest, I will contest," he said.

The general election is held every five years. The last general election was held in November 1999 and the next one must be held in or before 2004.

On money politics in Umno, Dr Mahathir said the situation had improved slightly following several actions taken by the party supreme council, including expulsion and suspension of the Umno members and leaders involved.

"Although we can only make assessment during the election for divisional head or when election and the selection of candidates is near, that is the time when the use of money may resurface.

"But I am confident that the majority of Umno leaders and members are aware of the action that could be taken against them, causing them to lose their position altogether," he said.

He was confident that with less money politics, Umno would be in a strong position to display better performance in the next general election.

"I believe that in the next general election, Umno will show better performance as even now many people are interested to join Umno. The present Umno leaders are more serious. They have realised and ceased actions that could destroy Umno," he said

-- BERNAMA

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