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DPM: Barisan's strength stems from willingness to share power

MALACCA, Sat. - The Barisan Nasional is perhaps the most successful multi-racial coalition in the world as it practises genuine power-sharing, its deputy chairman, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said today.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the BN's strength was derived from its willingness and ability to share power.

With all races and communities represented in the Government, all decisions made reflected the people's wishes.

"This is actually our strength. Because of that, we are able to implement policies and programmes successfully because they have been endorsed by the people," he said when opening the Malacca BN convention at Dewan Seri Negeri in Ayer Keroh.

The BN's approach was practical with power-sharing the coalition's tradition and style of administration, he added.

Abdullah said the people supported the BN formula as no one was sidelined.

"As a long-serving member of the Cabinet, I can assure that this power-sharing is genuine. It is not a matter of convenience or just a show to fish popular support."

Abdullah said he could not remember any Cabinet decision taken without consultation.

"It is the same at the (State) Excos and BN (supreme council). We do not compromise on this. All decisions are by consensus. It will only become a decision when everybody agrees to it," he said.

Contrary to allegations that Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was dictatorial in running the country, Abdullah said one of the best qualities of Dr Mahathir was his will-ingness and patience to listen to views.

"As far as I can remember, he has never stopped anyone from speaking or saying that no argument is necessary as the matter at hand is too sensitive."

Abdullah said Pas expected BN component parties to quarrel about Dr Mahathir's announcement that Malaysia was an Islamic nation, but this did not happen as the matter had been discussed in a rational manner and later endorsed by the BN supreme council.

"Everyone was given the opportunity to present his views before a collective decision was arrived at. The critics were dumbfounded but this is how the BN works."

Abdullah said the same approach was used on the issue of teaching Science and Mathematics in English in schools.

He added that racial co-operation among the communities was also much better now compared with years ago.

This could partly be attributed to government policies and programmes which emphasised co-operation, tolerance, moderation and unity.

"I can say that this is the biggest achievement of BN. Many may not realise its significance because we are so used to these values.

"They are practised not only in the Government and parties, but also by the people. For example, one particular community may form the majority in certain areas, but it has never stopped the people there from participating in activities involving all races."

Abdullah said the concept of administration espoused by the BN ensured resilience without which the country would not be able to progress and

develop rapidly.

"Foreign leaders, businessmen and tourists always speak highly of racial unity prevailing in the country. They are amazed that the country's multi-ethnic society can co-exist harmoniously whereas other countries are torn by racial conflicts."

Abdullah also advised Malacca BN leaders and supporters not to squabble over the allocation of parliamentary and State seats in the next general election, especially with the redelineation exercise giving birth to an additional parliamentary and three State constituencies.

He said bickering would only weaken the coalition.

"However, I am confident such things will not take place here. I am sure everyone will place unity above everything else and be prepared to set aside differences for the sake of a BN victory."

He added that the State BN's priority was to wrest the sole parliamentary and four State seats held by the Opposition.