

15/01/2002

Leaders deny Keadilan heading for doom

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Parti Keadilan Nasional leaders today dismissed claims the party was heading for imminent doom and that its members lacked dedication to the party's struggle.

Its deputy president Abdul Rahman Othman claimed the party was much stronger than what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad thought.

He added that the defection of party members was just an ordinary "cleaning up process".

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he was certain the defections of 69 key Perlis Keadilan members and the DAP's disinterest in the Opposition pact were signs of Keadilan's imminent doom.

He said Keadilan was a very fragile party that could easily crack, possessed limited aims and had members who lacked dedication to the party's struggle.

"Keadilan is definitely not heading for doom as the Prime Minister will hope. The defection is normal in any party. In 1987, a large number of Umno members left the party," said Abdul Rahman.

He was also optimistic that Keadilan would emerge stronger after all this.

On DAP's disinterest in the Opposition pact, he said it was their choice and that Keadilan and the other parties in the opposition coalition enjoyed sufficiently strong support from all races.

Keadilan information chief Ruslan Kassim said "staging" defections during by-elections was a normal Barisan Nasional tactic which it had repeatedly used.

"The BN is always trying to paint negative pictures of the Opposition and that it is waning in support and falling apart.

"This is not true and in fact Keadilan is gaining support," he said.

Ruslan said he was confident the voters would not be swayed by such tactics and that Keadilan would be well prepared to face the coming general election.

"It must be understood that we will always be the underdogs, in which we are not only going up against one BN component party, but the entire government machinery.

"We will continue fighting for what is right and we are confident that all efforts by the Government to discourage us will only be a waste of time," he said.

Keadilan secretary-general Sahri Bahri said the 69 defectors did not command as much support in the party and that they were only in charge of the election machinery in the by-election.

He said he was sceptical of the number as he has yet to check on their membership numbers.

"When they left, there was a resurgence of spirit among our supporters and more members came out and reinforced our campaign. So there was really a silver lining when the 69 left."

On the Prime Minister's statement that the defections spelt the imminent doom for Keadilan, Sahri said he was disappointed and surprised with the statement.

(END)