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Mahathir-Election

PAS HAS NO CHANCE OF WINNING THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, SAYS PM

JITRA, May 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that PAS does not stand a chance of winning the next general election in view of the increasing support for Umno among the Malays.

He said that PAS, which claims that it would be able to capture all the seats in the next general election, could keep on dreaming.

"In the 1999 general election, PAS won 27 seats and Umno 72 seats, but PAS went to town as though it has won all the seats," he said when simultaneously opening the Kubang Pasu Umno delegates' conference and the Darul Qiyam Hall of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Pulau Nyior here.

He also launched the Kubang Pasu voters information management system, also at the school.

Dr Mahathir said that PAS members were even now joining Umno on realising that PAS was not a true Islamic party.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that the Malays were now more aware and returning to Umno while the non-Malays were increasingly in support of the government.

He however said that while it was heartening that a large number of Malays were joining Umno, the party was not too happy over the attitude of some Umno members at the federal, division and branch levels who were hesitant in accepting them as they felt the new members especially the highly educated would threaten their positions in the party.

"Existing Umno members should discard this attitude in the interest of the party and the nation.

"Umno's rejuvenation concept entails the entry of the younger generation as they will eventually pursue Umno's struggles which are never ending, to develop the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the membership of the younger generation in Umno should be accepted with open arms if the existing Umno members truly love the party.

The entry of the younger generation into Umno Youth, Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno should not be disrupted, he said.

Relating his experience, Dr Mahathir said that he was also at one time prevented from joining Umno when he was a medical practitioner as the leadership then was afraid that their positions would be affected.

"When I was selling banana fritters at Pekan Rabu (in Alor Setar), becoming an elected representative and prime minister was far from my mind," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there was only one post of prime minister and as such aspiration for the post should not become an obsession.

He said that such obsession should not lead to members setting up a new party and defaming others.

Whether or not a person becomes a leader was predestined, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the younger generation joining Umno, on the other hand, should be sincere in the pursuit of the struggle in the interest of the religion, race and nation.

Only then would they qualify to be elected, instead of wresting power in the party, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that efforts to attract more new members should be enhanced even though the party had set a target of a 10 per cent increase in membership.

He also said that the Umno leadership at the various levels would

weaken if the trend among those who were defeated in party elections and their supporters withdrew their support for those who were elected.

-- BERNAMA

JM HS RM