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Mahathir-Opposition

PROBLEMS PLAGUING OPPOSITION PROVIDES GOOD CHANCE FOR BN, SAYS PM

LANGKAWI, Jan 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Barisan Nasional (BN) stands a good chance of retaining the Indera Kayangan state seat in view of the problems faced by the opposition in the by-election campaign.

"I feel that (chances of winning) look good as we all know that many of the Keadilan members have abandoned Keadilan," he said when asked to comment on the move by Keadilan's Indera Kayangan state by-election director to join Umno together with 68 other party leaders yesterday.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir, who arrived here yesterday, was accompanied by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain on a tour of various development projects in Langkawi.

According to press reports, the deputy chairman of the Perlis Keadilan liaison body, Mej (R) Mohamed Shariff Abdul Razak, left the party together with several of his colleagues alleging that Keadilan's leadership at the federal level had totally disregarded the views of the party leaders at the state level in the selection of the candidate in the by-election.

The prime minister said that Keadilan's struggle was only in the pursuit of one objective and no other.

"Members of the party are also not dedicated to the struggle and as such, gets cracked and broken easily," he said.

"I am convinced this is a sign that Keadilan will eventually just disintegrate," he said.

Other developments had also affected Keadilan badly, said Dr Mahathir, following the DAP's withdrawal from the opposition alliance, due to its refusal to be associated with PAS' Islamic state issue.

The DAP has also forbidden its members from participating in the by-election campaign even in their individual capacity and warns that the party will continue to do so for as long as PAS is adamant in its stand.

Asked whether events involving the opposition were staged, Dr Mahathir said: "We never try to get out of situations by saying that this and that have been staged...we acknowledge whatever is true as the truth and whatever is untrue as untruth.

"It appears as if PAS and Keadilan do not have reasonable grounds regarding the arms heist (in Sauk). Is it reasonable to believe that the arms heist is staged but not the other aspects. How can we say it is staged when the weapons have been used to commit murder...it's ridiculous," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the opposition was running out of ideas and had resorted to bringing up a fatal incident to win votes in the by-election.

Keadilan Youth vice head Mohamed Zahid Mohamed Arip raised the issue of the tragic death of Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim's young son during the by-election campaign, saying that it was God's way of punishing him.

"It's just not right...because it's our culture to pay our respects when a death occurs. Even if it's our enemy who is bereaved, we shouldn't say that it serves him right," he said.

Asked to comment on the tendency towards violence among students in the country, the prime minister said that he was dismayed over the matter.

"I fail to understand how the students can display such tendency," he said when commenting on the case of a Besut secondary school student who

was detained last Thursday for allegedly having in his unlawful possession explosives and ammunition.

He said that such incidents show that there were parties teaching students to become violent and this was already evident.

"This is not our culture...we are not a violent race but there are people keen on importing terrorism into the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia would seek information from Singapore on the militant network operating in the republic and having links with the movement in the country.

"I'm not aware of other details...it's the matter for the police to deal with," he said.

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