

Support Pak Lah

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Barisan policies will continue under my successor, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mahamad has called on Malaysians to support Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, his anointed successor who will take over as the country's fifth prime minister in November.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and head of the country's largest coalition party, said although Abdullah had his own style of administration, the policy of the Barisan Nasional government would remain.

"He is my successor and will lead Barisan. But what we have promised, we will continue to deliver under Abdullah.

"There will be no change in the policy of the Government and we should not be doubtful. With the same policy, we will continue to develop and become an example to the world," he said at the 50th anniversary celebration of power sharing in the ruling party at Stadium Merdeka, here, yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also took swipes at what he called a "synthetic alternative" group, which he said was now in disarray because of disagreement among themselves.

He said the Barisan, as a unique coalition of 14 political parties, needs a powerful mandate to enable it to continue developing and administering the country in a better manner.

The Prime Minister said, "Barisan's struggles to bring development to the

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Dr M happy that there is no power struggle

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country and people had been evident since its inception and they would be continued by its leaders.

The power-sharing cause, which was laid out by the first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, had been carried out by subsequent leaders, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and himself.

"At the end of October, I will relinquish the post happily because there is a successor. There is no power struggle among us," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who took over from Hussein in July 1981, said the country would continue to develop if the Government's policies stayed.

"That is our vision. At every level, from the top leadership to the children in the kindergartens, we have to dedicate ourselves to the country so we will be respected by the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he also hoped the

people would continue to support Barisan in the coming general election.

"We are not shy to ask the people to support us totally so we can help the people and not worry about our survival," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people trusted the Government even during the "difficult" 1999 general election.

He said Barisan not only retained two-thirds majority in the Dewan Rakyat but increased its representation to three-quarters of the electorate.

"I sincerely hope the people will continue to give us this kind of support because the stability will help us become a developed nation sooner," he said.

"People often asked me how we managed to do it. I told them it is easier done than a coalition of two parties because if one of the parties decides to pull out, then the coalition would collapse.

Under Barisan, if one party decides

to leave us, we will not be affected much and will still be strong," he said, adding that smaller parties could not hold the coalition to ransom if they did not get their way.

On a personal note, Dr Mahathir said he would be stepping down with a sense of relief because he had a worthy successor in Abdullah.

"He has also given his word that he will carry on with the Barisan policy," he said.

At a press conference later, Dr Mahathir said he was pleased with the response from Barisan component parties, which had all given their support to Abdullah as his successor.

On Abdullah leading Barisan in the general election, Dr Mahathir said he was confident of Abdullah's capability as even in the past Abdullah had played a big role in elections.

Dr Mahathir also said he would go to the ground to campaign for Barisan candidates in the upcoming general

election even though he would be an ordinary member and not a candidate.

"I will continue to campaign because I remember people campaigned for me until I became prime minister. It is my turn now to repay them," he said.

On the political situation in Sabah and Sarawak where parties are splitting up to form more parties, Dr Mahathir said Barisan would not simply accept a party into its fold because "we also want to be cautious."

He also said Barisan would not force the parties to merge because it acknowledged that there were racial differences or divergence of opinions among the parties.

"Each race and party is free to have its own way as long as they subscribe to our principle of power-sharing," he said.

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