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Mahathir-Power

BN NEEDS STRONG MANDATE TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY FURTHER, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- Barisan Nasional (BN), a unique coalition of political parties, needs a powerful mandate to enable it to continue developing and administering the country in a better manner, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

While convincing the people that only the BN could administer Malaysia well, the Prime Minister said the BN struggles to bring development to the country and people had been outlined since its inception and would be continued by its leaders.

He said the BN cause which was laid out by the first Prime Minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj, had been carried out by subsequent prime ministers Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, 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.

"We are a group of government with joint responsibilities and believe in the policies of BN.

"That's why when Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi takes over, he openly pledges to continue with the BN struggle," Dr Mahathir said in his speech when launching the 50th anniversary of the BN Power Sharing Excellence at the Stadium Merdeka, here today.

He said BN members and the rakyat need not worry about Abdullah's commitment to the BN cause.

"Thus, I urge all BN members and supporters to give full support to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi," he said to loud applause from the tens of thousands of BN component party members and supporters.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said there would be no major changes, only maybe "his style would be different."

He believed that by implementing the same policies, Malaysia would continue to progress and become a model state.

He said that by upholding strongly to the principles of the BN struggles, Malaysia would continue to progress although there would be changes in its leadership by the year 2020.

"This is our vision and mission, and all of us at all levels from the top leadership down to the children at school and kindertens will dedicate ourselves to become a noble nation that is progressive and respected in the world," he said.

In conjunction with the anniversary, Dr Mahathir reminded all BN members to make a pledge to continue developing the country.

He said when the country was progressive, the rakyat would benefit.

In his hour-long speech, Dr Mahathir also touched on the history of the setting up of the BN from the Alliance era to the present where the coalition now has 14 component parties nationwide.

Its success had now attracted the attention of many foreign leaders who wanted to know the secret of the power-sharing success of the BN which represented various ethnic groups, he said.

He said the BN was unique in that it was a merger of many political parties which was easily managed and even when there were component parties withdrawing from the coalition, the BN could still continue to rule the country.

He said the BN was not a coalition formed out of desperation after the general election.

"In Malaysia, it is not a marriage of convenience after the general

election but it had started very much earlier. Since 1952, we have maintained the cooperation even when there was no general election," he said.

Dr Mahathir said BN gave recognition to all parties representing the various races including the minority groups and they did not compete among themselves, and instead contested in the general election under the BN symbol, the scale.

"We use only one symbol, that is, the scale which is more fair than the party called 'Keadilan' (Justice)," he said.

The Prime Minister said the coalition too wanted to emulate the BN's party coalition concept by calling themselves the 'alternative front' or 'barisan alternatif'.

"This is a copycat party, a synthetic party. They form a coalition for the purpose of cheating," he said, adding that it would be unfortunate if the people were to support the opposition party because they did not bring any progress unlike the BN.

He said the people could compare between the states ruled by the opposition which were still bogged down by problems of poverty and the states under the BN which were more developed. This was the mistake made by the people who chose the opposition.

He criticised the opposition who only knew how to make promises but failed to fulfil them.

Citing the unwillingness of PAS to explain the concept of Islamic state that it wanted to adopt, he said it showed that the party was not sincere to the people, especially the non-Muslims, and that they only wanted to cheat the rakyat.

"In the BN, we not only have the Muslims and non-Muslims, but when we declare Malaysia as an Islamic country, they (the non-Muslims) support us because they know we practise the true teachings of Islam and did not take away their (religious) freedom," he said.

Dr Mahathir also urged BN members to recall the party's history to ensure better direction.

"We form the BN government and accommodate all parties, races and regions. Everyone is represented in the BN Cabinet.

"The consideration given to all races and regions has created a just government," he said, stressing that the BN was not ashamed to ask the people to give it a stronger mandate during the election campaign to enable it to serve the rakyat.

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