

14 JAN 2003

Koh-Formula

M'SIANS NEED NEW IDEAS, SAYS DR KOH

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysians should learn to look at things from a new angle and freshness as this can be a winning formula for them to survive in the political world and even in the business environment, Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said today.

Malaysians, he said, should feel inspired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's capability and willingness to renew and to have fresh ideas, to look things at new angles, which was indeed a strength of the Malaysian political system besides the ability to reach consensus.

"This has encouraged Malaysians, politicians and businessmen alike, to look at things from different directions and in a new way," he said at the Malaysia Strategic Outlook 2003 Conference here.

Despite some uncertainties, Malaysia had actually enjoyed stability since independence, when very few countries could have fully elected prime ministers, he said.

"This attributes to Barisan Nasional (BN) where politics of consolidation, cooperation and consensus has been a very important winning formula, which not only ensures winning at elections but also winning for the people.

"It is a system where there are checks and balances, where we take account of the interest of different communities," he said.

He said the fact that sometimes the communities raised the subject of "unhappiness" among themselves indeed proved that the government was not biased or prejudiced when making decisions.

He said Gerakan was looking at more Malaysian angles when dealing with party issues and hoped that this would trigger similar thinking in other component parties.

"We are not going to say that we hope to play a dominant role, but our approach towards political issues would be an approach that can inspire and motivate the younger Malaysians to think in a different way."

He said there were lots of changes taking in place in Malaysian politics.

"There are shifts of convergence with non-communal and non-racial approach in politics, and that would be the order of the day. The focus would be more on issues of principle rather than solely on ethnics."

He said Umno had also become multiracial in a way, with its non-Malay bumiputera and non-Muslim bumiputeras in Sabah, while the MCA had announced that it would accept members of Chinese parentage.

Touching on the rivalry between Gerakan and MCA which dates back to the 1970s, Dr Koh said that it should be seen as a rivalry between siblings.

"There are times when elbow space is too congested and they begin to kick each other, where some become overzealous and intense but nonetheless, at the end of the day, rationality and reason always prevail."

Most importantly, he said, none of them forgot the responsibility not only to Barisan Nasional but also to the Malaysian people.

-- BERNAMA

WNZ AHH JK