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Gerakan-Lim

DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP STRENGTHENS UNITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 23 (Bernama) -- The true Malaysian leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has helped strengthen national unity and social integration in the country, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said today.

He said that as testimony to the endorsement of his social development policy, Malaysians had given the Barisan Nasional (BN) overwhelming electoral victory in the 1995 general election and repeated it in 1999, even though the Malay support for BN was slightly reduced.

"I'm confident that the support will and has already returned to our side again because our people have had enough of the myopic, opportunistic and dangerous politics practised by the Opposition," he said in his speech at the Gerakan 32nd National Delegates Conference here.

About 1,800 delegates are attending the two-day conference which was opened by Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and other BN component leaders.

Dr Lim said that many social analysts, including world-celebrated writer and social scientist, Dr Alvin Toffler, had hailed Dr Mahathir's ability to maintain and cultivate ethnic harmony.

He quoted Dr Alvin Toffler as saying: "If any macroeconomist, investment banker or editorial writer thinks he or she can do a better job of holding a complex, multi-ethnic state together in relative peace, in a world stained by ethnic cleansing, please step forward, Mahathir has done it".

He said this could be further elaborated when Dr Mahathir laid out nine strategic objectives of Vision 2020, with the top priority to establish a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny.

"No other leader in the whole Malaysian history as a nation has given so much emphasis and hope to the creation of a truly Bangsa Malaysia than Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"He has constantly reminded us not to take for granted the need to progress with the task of creating a matured liberal and tolerant society which not only tolerates but can also appreciate and celebrate the ways of others," he said.

Dr Lim also said that during Dr Mahathir's administration, every Malaysian could find his or her place and share of cultural and social indulgence and witness how each and every community celebration was turned into a national festival with multi-ethnic participation.

The education system in the public and private institutions was made more open and inclusive of all communities in Malaysia, including the setting up of "Sekolah Wawasan" or Vision Schools to enable the students to "study, eat and play" together.

"I also believe that the National Service programme, which is aimed at bringing young Malaysians together to build up their resilience, spirit of patriotism and national unity, will further enhance integration and appreciation of each other in a multiracial society.

"Another critical aspect of social development is to ensure that our society embraces good ethical and moral values which must also take cognisance of strong religious and spiritual values.

"While we have performed extremely well in economic and infrastructure development, we must take note of the malaise affecting our society,

especially the case of having first-world infrastructure and third-world mentality," Dr Lim said.

-- BERNAMA

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