

17 NOV 2003

Mahathir-Promise

MAHATHIR PROMISES TO HELP CAMPAIGN FOR KEDAH BN

ALOR STAR, 17 Nov (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad promised today to help campaign for the Kedah Barisan Nasional (BN) in particular Umno in facing the opposition in the next general election.

The former prime minister, who had said that he would not seek re-election for the Kubang Pasu parliamentary seat, said he would return to Kedah help in the election campaign.

"I will return to Kedah to campaign, my obligation to clear up any confusion raised by the opposition," he said at a news conference on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport, Kepala Batas near here.

This is Dr Mahathir's first visit to the state since handing over the country's prime ministership to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last Oct 31.

He was accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali. Some 3,000 people, mostly supporters of BN component parties were on hand to welcome them.

Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin were also present.

Dr Mahathir, who had also expressed his willingness to act as campaign adviser to Kedah BN, said he felt that it was time for him to help the the Kedah BN which had campaigned for him in the past.

He was confident that the Kedah BN would record a landslide victory in the next general election based on the current state of the opposition, which looked strong in the 1999 general election because of the issue of the former deputy prime minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I think the situation in Kedah has reverted to that prior to the 1999 general election," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said he was moved by the large crowd at the airport to welcome him although he was no longer in power.

"It shows that even though a leader is no longer in power, he still has the people's support. This is good for the BN, It also shows that the people appreciate what the government is doing," he said.

Dr Mahathir also praised his successor whom he described as hard-working, visiting places all over the country even during the fasting month of Ramadan.

"He feels it is his responsibility to continue with the development of the country. I hope everyone will give their support to Abdullah," he said.

On PAS, Dr Mahathir said the opposition party was confused because at one time it claimed that it would be easy to capture Kedah because he was not seeking re-election but recently one of its leaders said PAS would contact in Kubang Pasu if he were to defend his seat.

"It shows that PAS is only using Islam to become `Yang Berhormat', not for religion, race or country," he said.

Dr Mahathir later visited the Pekan Rabu where he spent about half an hour at the biggest Bumiputera shopping complex here to buy delicacy for the breaking of the fast.

-- BERNAMA

MAN MNH ABG