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Election-Mahathir

ARABS SHOCKED OVER PAS' PROMISE OF PASSAGE TO HEAVEN, SAYS MAHATHIR

JERLUN, March 20 (Bernama) -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the claim by PAS that those who vote for the party is guaranteed a passage to heaven has also shocked the Arabs.

The former prime minister said that when he was in Saudi Arabia recently, many Arabs were shocked on reading a report in a local newspaper quoting PAS spiritual leader Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat as saying that those who vote for PAS would be assured of a place in heaven.

"The Arabs themselves were shocked and asked would they not be able to go to heaven as they are not Malaysians and certainly will not be voting for PAS.

"They were saddened because there are Muslims who could make such claims," he said when opening the Jerlun Umno division's Wisma Umno here.

Present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and BN's Datuk Abdul Rahman Ariffin who is contesting the Jerlun parliamentary seat, and the BN candidates contesting state seats -- Othman Aziz (Ayer Hitam) and Abu Hassan Sarif (Kota Seputeh).

Dr Mahathir, who is Kedah Barisan Nasional election adviser, also challenged PAS to prove through the Quran or Hadith (a collection of sayings of Prophet Muhammad and of traditions about him) stating that voters who do not vote for PAS in the election are apostates.

He said that elections were held to determine which party would form the government and rule the country, and not to determine the faith of Muslims.

"It is not held to determine who are apostates because nobody could ever determine who are apostates because that's not the task of political parties. Elections are for the people to elect their representatives in parliament who are credible and efficient and if in sufficient number, then

to form the government," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Nik Aziz who previously stated that women cannot become leaders was now under pressure to field women candidates merely to fish for votes and as such, in Kedah, the party was fielding two women candidates, Aishah Ghazali in the Merbau Pulas state constituency and Dr Rohani Abdul Mutalib in the Jitra state constituency.

"Umno has been fielding women candidates right from the start because in Islam, women also have their rights," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said that the Kedah BN needs to do better in this general election.

"After losing several seats to PAS in 1999, the Kedah BN must do better and recapture those seats," he said.

Speaking at a meet-the-people session in Kangar, Dr Mahathir said that the BN must still remain in power for the sake of the people and the future of the country.

He was concerned over the tactics of the opposition which claims that electing PAS was in line with the Islamic struggles, causing confusion among the people.

Dr Mahathir said that the BN, a coalition of parties representing the various races in the country, was the best example of cooperation as the respective component parties was not greedy or power crazy.

"They use religion for politics...we promote religion to ensure the country's progress," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the people's support for the BN in Perlis in the general election.

"There are only 15 people (candidates contesting state seats)...not many, but give them all your votes. We are not voting in just the elected representatives but the government," he said.

In his speech, Shahidan said that all the three parliamentary seats in Perlis were considered "white" while all the 15 state seats could be won by the BN.

In the last general election, the BN won 12 state seats. The Sanglang,

Guar Sanji and Santan state seats were won by PAS.

Perlis has 112,482 voters, mostly Malays.

-- BERNAMA

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