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Election-Mahathir

DON'T BE COMPLACENT OVER LANDSLIDE VICTORY - DR M

By Jamaluddin Muhammad

KUALA LUMPUR, March 22 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the Barisan Nasional (BN) not to be complacent over its resounding victory in yesterday's general election.

This is because the political climate might be different in the next general election, he said.

"Every time a general election is called, there's a climate and if the BN, with such a strong and clear mandate, does not deliver its promises, the voters may once again feel disappointed," he told BERNAMA.

Asked on what he feared most following the BN's thumping victory, Dr Mahathir said: "Usually, after winning big, they'll become proud and arrogant...like PAS in Terengganu, eventually leading to its downfall.

The BN must be humble and its elected representatives must discharge their duties to the masses' expectations.

As at 5.30pm today, the BN has won 196 seats in Parliament while the opposition bagged 17. The status of another six seats are not known as the recounting was still in progress.

Dr Mahathir said the election climate differed from one election to another.

For instance, in 1995, the BN won handsomely because the opposition could not exploit the issues then to their advantage.

He said the coalition performed badly in the last general election in 1999 owing to the sacking from Umno and jailing of his then deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as the Malays lost confidence in Umno and BN.

Dr Mahathir said he saw yesterday's election results as the people's endorsement to the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"He's the one who played a crucial role despite becoming Prime Minister for less than four months but he succeeded in projecting a good image through his leadership. I'd like to congratulate him," he said.

On BN's success in recapturing Terengganu, Dr Mahathir said: "I did not expect it. I thought it will only be a 50-50 chance. I did not expect to see Haji Hadi (former Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang) to lose."

"It looks like the Gelombang Biru (Blue Wave) programme launched several years ago has been effective in changing the people's thinking.

Furthermore, the issues in 1999 are no more," he said.

He said top leaders of PAS and Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) lost in this election because they harped on old issues which made the people bored and fed up.

"The present day voters are smart and they cannot be fooled," he said.

On DAP Chairman Lim Kit Siang and his deputy Karpal Singh's return to Parliament, Dr Mahathir said: "I think the voters purposely want to give them the seats. Actually, the voters are not so much their supporters. They vote them in because there is a view that in a democracy, there must be opposition," he said.

Dr Mahathir also commented on some voters who were unable to exercise their electoral rights due to missing names in the electoral roll, slip-ups in the printing of party symbols on ballot papers and sending wrong ballot papers to a constituency.

The former Prime Minister said the Election Commission must have a checklist system to ensure preparations at every level was adequate and accurate.

"I'm sad because some people's names are on the electoral roll but when they go to the polling stations, their names are not there.

"Such glitches should not recur because the problem was raised before to be rectified," he said.

Asked how he followed the election and its results as he was no longer the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said: "(I feel) relief a bit but I was in front of the TV till 2am today.

"Among the results I paid serious attention was Kedah but unfortunately

(the results) were very late, the last. Kedah BN won 31 of the 36 state seats. Kedah has redeemed its dignity."

Dr Mahathir's message to the newly-elected members of parliament and state assemblymen was: "Discharge your duties diligently in the interests of the people and not abstain from attending Dewan Rakyat and state assembly meetings.

"Don't come for a while just to claim the allowance," he said.

On certain people who used only Proton Saga before becoming elected representatives but after a month becoming a wakil rakyat, they used Mercedes Benz, he said: "I think Pak Lah said he wants to audit. He should audit at the early stage. We must check and see what car they used and when they bought it.

"If someone can afford to buy a Mercedes Benz suddenly, it shows something is not right. We should live a moderate life. Even Pak Lah only uses a Proton Perdana," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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