

02 MAR 2004

Election-Mahathir

DR MAHATHIR CONFIDENT OF A RESOUNDING VICTORY FOR BARISAN NASIONAL

KUALA LUMPUR, March 2 (Bernama) -- Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is confident that the Barisan Nasional (BN) will win with more than a two-thirds majority in the forthcoming 11th general election.

He said that in the last general election in 1999, the opposition parties had exploited the issue of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to gain votes.

"But now people already accepted that what has been done was right. It will be better than 1999," he said when asked by reporters on the BN's chances in the upcoming general election.

He earlier held a media conference on the latest development of the Malaysian Microchip (MMChip) here.

In September last year, Malaysia acquired the property rights to design the MMChip and its production and marketing. A multiband RFID (next-generation radio frequency identification), the MMChip measures 0.25 sq mm -- about the size of a decimal point -- and can be embedded in paper.

It is useful for a variety of purposes such as replacement of barcode tags in retail goods, for differentiation between genuine and counterfeit currency notes, and for use in smart cards.

The government has set up the MM Committee in the Prime Minister's Department, an independent authority to approve and monitor the usage in the internationally competitive MM Chip locally and abroad.

Dr Mahathir relinquished his premiership on Oct 31 last year and was succeeded by his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said that the BN also had a good chance to wrest back Kelantan and Terengganu which are now under PAS rule.

On his promise to help campaign for the BN, Dr Mahathir said he was prepared to campaign for the ruling coalition. "I definitely will campaign, and I have already promised that I will campaign," he said.

Asked whether Umno or the BN component parties had invited him to start his campaign round, Dr Mahathir said he had yet to receive any invitation.

"Not yet...there are no programmes yet, the election has not even been fixed," he said.

Prior to his retirement as Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir had promised to help the BN in the election campaign especially for Umno even though he would not be defending his Kubang Pasu parliamentary seat in Kedah.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Kedah election machinery adviser, was also asked who would replace him in Kubang Pasu.

He said that it was up to the party to decide who would be fielded in Kubang Pasu.

On claims by some parties that he is still in power despite not holding any government and party posts, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know about that. If they have imagined that is so, they can imagine anything they want."

-- BERNAMA

HS AHH RM