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Ability to nurture Malays helped BN win in Johor, says Ghani

JOHOR BARU, Sat. - Johor's ability to preserve and nurture the aspirations of the Malays in a multi-racial society has helped the Barisan Nasional make a clean sweep in the last two general elections, State Umno chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said.

He said that to maintain the winning streak, it was vital that Umno's strength in Johor be preserved and no one was left out of the mainstream of development.

"No Malay in the rural or urban area should be left out. We do not want them to be trapped in poverty and suffer low self-esteem," he said in his address at the Johor Umno Convention 2003 today.

Ghani, who is Menteri Besar, stressed the need to fulfil the aspirations of the younger generation in Umno's scheme of things, saying this was imperative if the party was to remain relevant.

"We should not neglect the younger generation as they will be the ones to pick up where we have left," he said.

Ghani also said the party needed to continue pursuing knowledge, master science and technology and economic skills, as well as have moral and spiritual faith.

Pledging that Johor Umno would unite and work hard to ensure another 100 per cent victory for the BN in the next general election, he said the first step was to maintain peace and prosperity enjoyed by the people.

On the change of leadership from party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Ghani said Umno was mature enough to cope with the change.

"The change of leadership has always been administered in an orderly and dignified manner," he said.

Paying tribute to Dr Mahathir, Ghani said the party president had succeeded in setting higher goals for Umno.

"He has instilled a sense of purpose and confidence among the Malays so that they can be on par with others from the developed world.

"We must respect the decision by Dr Mahathir to resign," he said, adding that Umno should continue the struggles initiated by him.

Ghani said the change of party leadership was timely and was confident the new leadership under Abdullah would shoulder the responsibilities and high expectations of the people.

"I am also confident that Umno members and our friends from the other BN parties, together with the people, will give him undivided support."