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Scoring it big to honour a legacy

LEGITIMATE doubt or crackpot fears; valid suspicion or simple hysteria? These are the questions that arise over the scepticism of some on whether Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will retire in October.

One way to put it in context is to consider the degree to which paranoia has wormed its way into our political culture. The hodgepodge of rumours circulating through Malaysia's political landscape - particularly with party elections and the general election getting closer - suggests that conspiracy theories, wild stories and bizarre plots are being spun by people to fan political division, create hatred and distrust as well as to serve their own agendas.

The allegation that Dr Mahathir could change his mind about resigning may also be a devious attempt to ruffle political nerves and, consequently, spawn uncertainty in the economic climate. Those who sow doubt in order to pressure him to leave sooner are the worst offenders.

As a man of steely qualities, Dr Mahathir has proved that he stands by his word. He has quashed the rumours by reiterating that he would stand by his earlier statement that he would not lead Barisan Nasional in the next general election. That would mean the next general election will be held after Dr Mahathir bids farewell in October.

Whatever the case, the BN must ensure it wins by a landslide, to honour Dr Mahathir and his legacy. There is no doubting the seriousness of Dr Mahathir's mandate to the rakyat when he addressed the delegates at the opening of the 57th MIC general assembly: The people must ensure the BN is returned to power with a big majority in the next general election.

On paper, the coalition is a natural vote-winner. The politics prescribed by BN is the best way to preserve harmony, unity and prosperity. It is the only bulwark against political instability and interference by external neo-colonial powers. But the component parties of the BN must put aside their internal problems and minor differences. In presenting a united front, they would be leading by example - the surest way to win the people's hearts. Contrary to the opinions of some ex-politicians, the BN can hardly fail by following in Dr Mahathir's footsteps.