



Mahathir and his book at Perdana Foundation in Putrajaya.

Dr M: Vote for good candidates, not parties

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PUTRAJAYA: Former premier Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad says voters should vote for "good candidates" instead of parties in the next general election to ensure the Barisan Nasional (BN), especially its main component Umno, is "cleansed".

"(This is) because there is no hope that Umno can be cleansed from within. Everything is controlled now. Nobody can have an opinion and contrary views ... they will make sure they are unheard," he told a press conference after launching a book entitled *Mahathir's Selected Letters to World Leaders*.

He said voters should not support corrupt leaders, even if the candidates are from BN.

"That way, we can clean up BN and Umno," said Mahathir, who was in his usual combative mood.

Mahathir said he would campaign for only candidates who can bring good to the country but will not campaign for opposition candidates.

"Last time, I said I would help in the (election) campaign. But in 2004, the BN was so popular, so I did not campaign. (Now) I will campaign if I believe that candidate can bring benefit to the people," he said.

"I hope that we will love the country enough to vote for the best candidate. But I think people who support BN should be a little bit more selective. (They) should think

and have wisdom to choose people they support."

On whether he could accept the fact that opposition parties would win more seats in the next general election, he said the Opposition would not win more seats than BN and that even if they had more seats, they would not be able to form a government.

Mahathir said political Islam will be exploited by PAS in the coming general election and the government will have its hands full managing it.

When a reporter asked whether he had a gentleman's agreement with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi that the latter would only helm the country for one term, he said: "Even if I say that I have this gentleman's agreement, there is no way I can prove this."

"(But), that was my thinking - that he (Abdullah) was older than Najib. He should be PM for one term, then Najib should be able to take over," he said.

The book contains 71 letters from Mahathir to the world leaders of his time, such as former British prime minister Tony Blair, former US president Bill Clinton, and US President George W. Bush.

The book, with an introduction and selected commentaries from former special envoy to the United Nations Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad, touches on the issues of terrorism, globalisation, economic and diplomatic relations, war and conflicts.

the sun - 31/1/2008

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