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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the Barisan Nasional government is still strong

Dr M: Barisan will get bigger majority at next polls

KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has predicted Barisan Nasional will win the next general election with a better majority compared with the 2008 elections.

He said this was because the government was still strong and the winning margin should be a good one.

"I hate to predict this thing because it may not be accepted very well, but I think winning strongly is very important in the next general election. The government will still win and the majority may be slightly better than in 2008."

Dr Mahathir had earlier delivered a keynote address entitled "The Malaysian Political Landscape, Experiences, Perspective and Thoughts" at the Third Malaysia Europe Forum (MEF) Kuala Lumpur Dialogue 2010.

Earlier in his speech, he said the 2008 general election saw BN doing very badly, losing five states and Kuala Lumpur, besides failing to get the two-thirds majority needed to form a strong government.

"The 2008 general election showed clearly that BN had lost the support not only of the sympathisers but also

the members of the component parties. Even BN strongholds were lost."

He said few dared to openly criticise the leader or the government of the fifth prime minister (his successor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi), but after the 2008 elections they felt that the leadership was mostly to be blamed for the debacle and they demanded a change of leadership.

"Known critics were prevented from speaking at meetings organised by the party, non-governmental organisations or individuals. Realising that the government feared criticisms, the opposition kept up a barrage."

Speaking on democracy, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not a liberal democracy because there were limitations on democratic freedoms, but Malaysia had shown that its democracy was free enough for those opposed to the government to win in elections.

"Democracy is perhaps the best political system ever devised by man, but like everything else devised by man, it is not perfect.

"Certainly, liberal democracy will not work with people who've only known authoritarian rule or are corrupt by nature."— Bernama