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Dr M: BN is the best option

TRACK RECORD:
Coalition has helped all races, since independence

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THE Barisan Nasional (BN) remains Malaysians' only option to govern the country because the opposition has "nothing to indicate that they will be a better government," said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the Umno-led government, from the time of the Alliance, had successfully looked after the interest of all races in the country.

Dr Mahathir said the opposition's strategy was one of relentless assault on BN and demonising it to win support.

He, however, said the lesson from the 2008 general election must be heeded and the component parties in BN must by now have addressed the issues leading to their loss of popularity among the electorate.

"Between 2004 and 2008, they were not conscious about their loss of popularity because the electorate did not say anything. Not even the Malays.

"They didn't criticise the government. They were all quiet.

"But in their hearts, they were sore with the government and the only way they could show this was by rejecting BN. It was the same with the Chinese and Indians.

"They were unhappy," he said in an interview at his Yayasan Al-bukhary office here.

*"In Malaysia, the government tries to provide everything that is good for the people."
Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad
former prime minister*



Dr Mahathir, aware of the opposition's attempt at drawing parallels between political developments in the Middle East in what is called the "Arab Spring" and calls for reforms in the country, said there was no comparison at all between the conditions in the Arab countries (Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Syria) and Malaysia.

"The situation in the Arab countries is that they are authoritarian governments.
"Hence, the governments never seem to look after the welfare of the people.
"Here, the first thing we did when we achieved independence was to create jobs for the people so that they could earn a living.
"Perks were given to companies

to set up labour-intensive industries.
"As a result, the unemployment rate was very low."

Dr Mahathir said a government must care for the people, whether it was authoritarian or not. If it didn't, the people would eventually rise against it.

"In Malaysia, the government tries to provide everything that is good for the people.
"Of course, there will be some failures along the way.
"However, you can't compare Malaysia with the Arab countries.
"I've seen them and met them. I've seen the poverty there. It's terrible."

On next week's Umno general assembly, which many believe to be the last before the 13th general

election, Dr Mahathir echoed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's sentiments that Umno members must be selfless and ready to make sacrifices for the party.

Dr Mahathir, who was Umno president for 22 years, expressed hope that during the assembly, delegates would be reminded of the importance of party unity and interests because there were many members "who are still thinking of what they could get from the party", in material terms.
"They are not thinking of what Umno can do for the Malays or the country or for Islam but 'what I can get from Umno'."

Dr Mahathir said he believed Umno was the only party that championed the cause and interest

of the Malays because it was in a position of power and what it did had more effects than what the opposition did.

For that reason, he said Umno should not veer from its objective of looking after the interest of the Malays without sidelining the other races.

"I'd like to emphasise that Umno has looked after the interest of the Malays without sidelining the other races, or other parties in BN.

"We know, for example, the other parties are able to get the support of their members and people to support BN.

"It shows that in order to protect Umno's interest, it doesn't mean the rights of the other races have to be disregarded."