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Dr M: Clear majority a must for two-party system

KUALA LUMPUR: The two-party system can only work if representatives are loyal to their parties, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

For that to happen, the ruling coalition must first get a clear majority.

"In a two-party system, one party will usually get a clear majority, but these days it also depends on how big the majority is.

"If the Government only obtains a 51% majority, it will not be able to focus on administration because of fears that members will leave for the other party," he said during a question-and-answer session with youth leaders at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the only way to ensure a stable government was by giving it solid support during a general election.

"In the past, the government had a majority of more than two-thirds. It could make brave decisions that were sometimes not even popular," he said.

In his 22 years as the prime minister, Dr Mahathir never lost the two-thirds parliamentary majority.

Barisan Nasional lost its two-thirds majority in the 2008 general election, the second time since 1969.

He also described former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah as "indecisive", saying:

"He says he is still in Barisan Nasional and Umno. I don't know who he's lining himself up with now."

After losing to Dr Mahathir in his bid for the Umno presidency in the 1987 party elections, Razaleigh resigned from the party and formed Semangat 46.

He recently claimed that the NEP under the watch of Dr Mahathir had widened economic disparities with the creation of rich Malay elites.