

Dr M: DAP risking it with Chinese vote in BN's Johor fort
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, April 7 — DAP is taking a risk by counting on Chinese votes in Johor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said, dousing the opposition party's southern campaign in doubt by insisting that the state is still a Barisan Nasional (BN) fortress.

The former prime minister shrugged off DAP's strategy of fielding heavyweights like veteran politician Lim Kit Siang to take on Gelang Patah, an urban MCA-held stronghold in Johor, saying he wondered why the party believes it could be victorious.

"That's a risk taken by them. Johor is a BN stronghold. Don't know how they think (they) can win there," Dr Mahathir said in an interview published in Utusan Malaysia's weekend edition today.

"Don't know. Maybe, they received information that we don't know. But as far as I know, Johor is not a safe area for opposition parties although we find that the attitude of the Chinese is not as before. But, we find now they return to support BN," the former BN chairman and Umno president said when asked about the federal opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR)'s bid to take over Johor in Election 2013.

He suggested that DAP was setting its sights on Johor because the party believes it has the support of the Chinese community there.

He commented on the opposition's strategy of aiming at Chinese votes in Johor seats, accusing DAP for allegedly being racist, claiming it is a "Chinese party" despite the party saying it has a multiracial membership and leadership.

"DAP plays the Chinese issues more than other quarters," Dr Mahathir said, saying that the former DAP vice-chairman Tengku Abdul Aziz Ibrahim had joined the party as he believed it represented all races, but had allegedly discovered that it did not care about the problems faced by the non-Chinese.

Earlier in the same interview, Dr Mahathir was asked about MCA, a Chinese-based party in BN, which he said has started to follow DAP in playing up the concerns of the Chinese community.

"We find that MCA feels the party's defeat in 2008 is because (it) didn't play the Chinese issues.

"So this time, because it doesn't want to look as if it agrees with Umno because maybe the Chinese will not support, MCA started taking steps in line with DAP but to me, that is a wrong perception," he said.

Dr Mahathir further said that the Chinese community does not appreciate the BN government's efforts, but said this scenario has now changed to favour BN.

"But now there's changes because they view that this government is responsible and able to ensure the country's safety," he said, citing the Najib administration's handling of the Sulu intrusion in Sabah as an example.

“(It’s) proven that the government is able to ensure security and I think the Chinese also appreciates and like if the country is stable because they are businessmen,” he said.

He contrasted the current government’s efforts in creating a safe environment conducive for businesses with the opposition, saying that they tend to incite chaos with demonstration and street protests.

He said that the opposition’s approach would affect the country’s economy and scare off investors, indicating that the Chinese community is well aware of this fact.

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