

Dr M on leaders who command respect and support

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IPOH, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said that it is better to have leaders who are less intelligent but who command a lot of respect and support from the people rather than to have ones who are intelligent but cannot command respect and popular support.

He said when leaders do not have strong support, it is difficult for them to get things done.

"Similarly, in a party like Umno, when it is time for a leader to step down, he should do so willingly to make way for a younger and more capable person," he said when opening the Parit Umno division building

and its annual delegates' meeting at Parit, 32km from here.

The Prime Minister, who is also the Umno president, said any change in the leadership at branch or divisional level should be carried out smoothly and peacefully.

Squabbles

"This is what the party wants. We are all free to contest in the party elections but what we do can sometimes cause misunderstandings and squabbles among party members.

"The desire to contest and win in the elections is a small matter compared

with the need to preserve unity in the party.

"A leader may be capable but he has no co-operation and support to carry out his plans when members are quarrelling among themselves."

"Umno's struggles are not over yet. We must continue with our efforts to build a Malaysia which is more united and prosperous.

"We want to see towns which are not dominated by only one race and rural areas by Malays who continue to live in poverty."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there were ample job opportunities in the country and he called on the people not to

be choosy.

"If there are not enough jobs, there will not be so many immigrant workers at the construction sites and land schemes. You can even find many of them in the Chow Kit area in Kuala Lumpur (laughter).

"The British brought immigrants because the Malays were not willing to work in the rubber estates and tin mines.

Accused

"Now we are on the brink of committing the same mistake if we refuse to work in those job sectors where many immigrant workers have come in.

"If we can sweat it out here in the sun to attend this function, we should also be prepared to sweat it out working in the sun." (Laughter).

On the Look East policy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it would not make people less Malaysian if they adopted the good work ethic of the Japanese and Koreans.

"In Islam, we are required to perform our daily obligations to God with utmost devotion. So when we are required to work, we must be prepared to work very hard to improve ourselves."

He said Umno had often been accused of being a party which concentrated too much on material development while neglecting spiritual values, but this was not true.

"Material development is good for the country and we are doing what is required by Islam."

The Quran reading competition, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, was not organised for political aims but "we are carrying out our duty to Islam."

He said Malaysia had become a model to many Islamic countries where by they had sent representatives to learn more about Quran reading and how to organise Quran reading competitions.

He added that there was even a suggestion that Islamic countries take turns to hold the international Quran reading competition but until now Malaysia was still the host.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the holding of Quran reading competitions was not merely to look for champions but to encourage the people to understand the interpretation of the Quran and practice it.

He said at last night's opening of the Quran reading competition in Kuala Terengganu, among the quotations in the Quran which caught

his attention was one which says, "the pious and the virtuous will inherit this world."

The Prime Minister said: "The world is God's gift of the highest value. We can benefit from it if we make it a happy and peaceful place to live in."