

UMNO-MAHATHIR R
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KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 23, (BERNAMA) -- ~~(DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD~~
HAS GIVEN AN ASSURANCE THAT YOUNG UMNO LEADERS WHO WISH TO ASCEND THE
PARTY'S LEADERSHIP Ladder WILL BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE
THEIR POLITICAL CALIBRE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT AS PARTY MEMBERS; THEY ARE FREE TO
VOICE THEIR VIEWS WITHOUT FEAR OF REPERCUSSIONS FROM THE TOP
LEADERSHIP.

HE SAID THIS IN AN INTERVIEW IN A SPECIAL ISSUE OF "MERDEKA" --
THE PARTY'S OFFICIAL ORGAN -- PUBLISHED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 35TH
UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

"NOW WE NOT ONLY REFRAIN FROM SACKING ANYONE BUT ALSO ALLOW THEM
TO CHALLENGE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP AND CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THEIR
POSITION," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THOUGH THE PARTY LEADERS COULD BE CHALLENGED, THIS
SHOULD BE DONE THROUGH THE PROPER CHANNELS AND NOT DEVIATE FROM THE
PARTY'S POLICIES AND DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS. --MORE 2050/AJ

UMNO-MAHATHIR 2 KUALA LUMPUR

HE FELT THAT THIS TREND WOULD NOT AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
PARTY -- ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARTY HAD RISEN TO
1.2 MILLION.

HE SAID THAT PERHAPS HIS STYLE AFFECTED THOSE WHO DID NOT GET A
POSITION IN THE HIERARCHY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE CHANGES HE HAD INTRODUCED WERE NOT
THAT RAPID, BEING INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT LONG BEFORE HE BECAME PARTY
PRESIDENT.

"WE ARE COMPETING WITH A WORLD THAT IS RAPIDLY PROGRESSING. IF WE
MOVE AT OUR PAST PACE, WE WILL BE LEFT BEHIND," HE SAID.

AS SUCH, THE PROCESS OF CHANGE MUST BE SPED UP SO THAT THE COUNTRY
WAS NOT LEFT BEHIND, HE SAID.

HE FELT HE MIGHT NOT BE LEADING THE PARTY FOR TOO LONG, ONLY JUST
TO SEE ALL THE VARIOUS IDEAS THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN STUDIED BEFORE HE
BECAME THE PARTY'S LEADER GETTING OFF THE GROUND.

THE QUESTION SHOULD NOT BE WHETHER THERE WERE MANY OR LITTLE
CHANGES BUT WHETHER THE CHANGES WERE ACCEPTED, HE ADDED. --MORE

UMNO-MAHATHIR 3 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE WOULD NOT BE UPSET IF THE PEOPLE
WERE ANGRY AT HIM IF CERTAIN CHANGES PROVED TO BE NO GOOD.

"I AM WILLING TO HAND OVER THE LEADERSHIP TO ANYONE WHO IS MORE
ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE," HE SAID.

ASKED WHAT FORM AND TYPE OF LEADERSHIP IN UMNO, THE BARISAN
NACIONAL AND THE GOVERNMENT HE WISHED TO SEE AFTER HE STEPPED DOWN,
HE SAID HE HOPED TO SEE WHAT HE HAD STARTED BEING MAINTAINED.

"BUT I BELIEVE THAT EVERY LEADER MUST HAVE HIS OWN STYLE," HE
SAID.

ON AN IDEAL ATMOSPHERE FOR A PARTY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HE SAID PAST
ASSEMBLIES HAD BEEN IDEAL IN THE SENSE THAT ELECTIONS OF LEADERS HAD
NOT DISTRACTED THE DELEGATES TO THE EXTENT OF RELEGATING THE ISSUES
TO BE DISCUSSED TO SECONDARY IMPORTANCE.

HE SAID THAT BEFORE THE PARTY CONSTITUTION WAS AMENDED TO PROVIDE
FOR TRIENNIAL ELECTIONS, THE ASSEMBLIES WERE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT
DETRIMENT TO THE TO BE DEBATED DESPITE THE ELECTIONS BEING ANNUAL
AFFAIRS. --BERNAMA 2116/AJ