

B E602 AAE
MAHATHIR-CLARIFY
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(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 12 (BERNAMA) -- UMNO PRESIDENT DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY HE IS WILLING TO STEP DOWN IF THE MEMBERS NO LONGER WANT HIM TO LEAD THE PARTY.

CLARIFYING A NEWSPAPER REPORT WHICH QUOTED HIM AS SAYING AT THE OPENING OF KUBANG PASU UMNO DIVISION DELEGATES CONFERENCE YESTERDAY THAT THE PROSPECT OF HIM RETIRING WAS LOOMING NEARER AS HE WAS NOW REACHING 60 YEARS OF AGE, HE SAID THE REPORT MADE IT LOOK LIKE HE WAS OFFERING TO STEP DOWN NOW.

+I ONLY SAID THAT I AM WILLING TO STEP DOWN FROM THE UMNO LEADERSHIP IF THIS WAS THE WISH OF PARTY MEMBERS,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE DELEGATES CONFERENCE OF AMPANG JAYA UMNO DIVISION HERE.

ANYONE, HE SAID, IF NO LONGER NEEDED, SHOULD STEP DOWN.

THE PRIME MINISTER BEGAN HIS SPEECH AT TODAY'S FUNCTION BY SAYING THAT HE WAS AFRAID OF MAKING PUBLIC SPEECHES NOW. -- MORE
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IF HIS SPEECH WAS MODERATE, UNLIVELY AND DULL, REPORTERS WOULD MODIFY IT TO MAKE IT SOUND MORE INTERESTING, HE SAID, DRAWING LAUGHTER FROM THOSE PRESENT.

AS SUCH, HE SAID, HE HAD TO CLARIFY WHAT HE HAD ACTUALLY SAID AT THE KUBANG PASU DIVISION DELEGATES CONFERENCE YESTERDAY.

HE EXPLAINED THAT WHAT HE HAD SAID WAS THAT HE WAS ALREADY 60 AND IF HIS SERVICE WAS TO BE TERMINATED IT COULD BE TERMINATED.

+BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT I AM OFFERING TO STEP DOWN,+ HE SAID, AGAIN DRAWING LAUGHTER.

HE SAID THAT WHAT HE HAD SAID WAS RELATED TO THE CONTESTS FOR POSTS IN UMNO.

+SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD LED FOR A LONG TIME REFUSE TO GIVE WAY WHILE THERE ARE OTHERS WHO HAD JUST JOINED THE PARTY ONE OR TWO DAYS AND ALREADY WANT TO BE LEADERS WITHOUT REGARD TO WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE PARTY.+

-- MORE.

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+IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS WE MUST ABIDE BY THE CONSTITUTION. WE SHOULD CONTEST IN A RESPECTABLE MANNER AND NOT TO BE TOO ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IT TO THE EXTENT THAT WE DO NOT CARE ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE PARTY.

HE SAID WHAT HE WAS AFRAID WAS THAT OTHERS MIGHT SAY, +IT'S EASY FOR HIM TO SAY BECAUSE HE'S ALREADY SECURED A PLACE IN THE PARTY.+

+IT WAS BECAUSE OF THIS THAT I SAID EVEN I, IF NO LONGER NEEDED, WILL HAVE TO STEP DOWN. -- BERNAMA

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