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GHAFFAR-MAHATHIR R'R'R'

BM

JOHOR BAHRU, AUG 12 (BERNAMA) -- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER GHAFAR BABA SAID TODAY HE IS IN NO HURRY TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER TO SUCCEED DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD.

+AS LONG AS DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR REMAINS HEALTHY IN BOTH BODY AND MIND, I WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HIM INDEFINITELY,+ HE SAID.

HE REFUTED ALLEGATIONS BY SOME QUARTERS THAT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS A DICTATOR AND DESCRIBED THE ACCUSATIONS AS +ABSOLUTE NONSENSE.+

ENCIK GHAFAR WHO IS ALSO UMNO DEPUTY PRESIDENT WAS SPEAKING AT A MEETING WITH ABOUT 500 JOHOR WANITA UMNO COMMITTEE MEMBERS AT THE MENTERI BESAR'S RESIDENCE +SAUJANA+ HERE THIS EVENING.

PRESENT WERE MENTERI BESAR HAJI MUHYIDDIN YASSIN, WANITA UMNO NATIONAL CHIEF DATIN PADUKA RAFIDAH AZIZ, NATIONAL VICE-CHIEF DATUK HAJAH NAPSIAH OMAR, WANITA UMNO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND FORMER WANITA UMNO CHIEF TAN SRI HAJAH AISHAH GHANI. -- MORE
2009MST 12 08 88

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GHAFFAR-MAHATHIR 2 JOHOR BAHRU

ENCIK GHAFAR SAID DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST LIBERAL PRIME MINISTERS AND THE ONE WHO MOST FREQUENTLY HELD DISCUSSIONS AND TALKS WITH OTHER LEADERS FIRST BEFORE TAKING A DECISION.

+I HAVE SERVED FORMER PRIME MINISTERS TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN, THE LATE TUN ABDUL RAZAK AND TUN HUSSEIN ONN BUT I FIND DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR TO BE THE ONE MOST PRONE TO HAVING TALKS WITHIN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISION,+ HE ADDED.

THE CLAIMS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS A DICTATOR WERE +UTTER NONSENSE+ BECAUSE +A DICTATOR WILL NEVER HAVE MEETINGS TO SEEK OTHER OPINIONS BUT ONLY ISSUES ORDERS.+

+I ON MY PART WOULD NOT LIKE TO WORK WITH A DICTATOR,+ HE ADDED.

+I AM ALSO PUZZLED WHY FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK MUSA HITAM RESIGNED AND WHY HE COULD NOT GET ALONG WITH DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR.

+NOW I KNOW IT APPEARS DATUK MUSA WAS IMPATIENT TO BECOME THE PRIME MINISTER.+ -- MORE
2028MST 12 08 88

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GHAFAR-MAHATHIR 3 JOHOR BAHARU

ENCIK GHAFAR SAID EXPELLING MEMBERS WAS NORMAL IN UMNO BECAUSE PREVIOUS LEADERS HAD ALSO EXPELLED MEMBERS +AND NOT DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALONE.+

RECALLING PAST INCIDENTS IN THE PARTY'S HISTORY, HE SAID THE TUNKU'S FIRST STEP IN TAKING OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF UMNO WAS TO EXPEL THE DATUK PANGLIMA BUKIT GANTANG WHO WAS AT THAT TIME PERAK MENTERI BESAR AND AN INFLUENTIAL MALAY LEADER.

WHEN HE BECAME THE PRIME MINISTER, THE TUNKU DISMISSED FIVE OR SIX MINISTERS WHO WERE NOT OF THE SAME THINKING AS HIM.

+TUN HUSSEIN DID THE SAME WHEN HE DROPPED THREE MINISTERS AND THREE DEPUTY MINISTERS WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER,+ HE ADDED.

ON THE OLD UMNO BEING AN UNLAWFUL SOCIETY, ENCIK GHAFAR SAID ONLY ITS REGISTRATION WAS CANCELLED BUT THE SPIRIT OF ITS STRUGGLE AND ITS INTEGRITY WERE STILL ALIVE AND FLOURISHING AMONG MEMBERS OF THE UMNO REPLACING IT.

THE SITUATION IS THE REVERSE WITH THE OPPOSITION PSRM WHOSE REGISTRATION IS STILL +ALIVE+ BUT WHOSE LEADERSHIP IS +DEAD+, ACCORDING TO HIM. -- MORE

2041MST 12 08 88

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GHAFAR-MAHATHIR 4 JOHOR BAHARU

PSRM HAD AT ONE TIME STOOD FOR ELECTIONS FROM PERLIS RIGHT DOWN TO JOHOR BAHARU BUT NEVER ONCE WON AND +IN FACT, WHO ITS LEADERS ARE I DO NOT KNOW.+

+I ONLY KNEW ITS CHAIRMAN WAS DATUK KAMPO RADJO WHEN I READ THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH IN THE PAPERS TODAY. I SENT A TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCE TO THE FAMILY,+ HE SAID.

ENCIK GHAFAR ASKED JOHOR BAHARU VOTERS TO REJECT PSRM BECAUSE MANY COUNTRIES IN EUROPE FOLLOWING A SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY WERE DECLINING IN PROGRESS BECAUSE OF THE SWITCH TO THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM.

+THE PEOPLE THERE ARE BEGINNING TO REBEL, STAGING STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS AND SO ON BECAUSE SOCIALISM STIFLES ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DOES NOT BENEFIT THEM,+ HE SAID.

+IN A SOCIALIST SYSTEM, ALL BUSINESS IS STATE-OPERATED AND STATE-OWNED AND THE PEOPLE REMAIN WORKERS FOREVER,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE SITUATION IN MALAYSIA WAS DIFFERENT.

IN MALAYSIA, ALL RACES WERE FREE TO CARRY OUT ANY BUSINESS, OWN AS MUCH PROPERTY AS THEY COULD AND THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY HAD BEEN DEVELOPING SINCE INDEPENDENCE 30 YEARS AGO. -- MORE

2104MST 12 08 88

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GHAFAR-MAHATHIR S JOHOR BAHARU

ON INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE DATUK SHAHRIR SAMAD, ENCIK GHAFAR SAID IT COULD NOT BE DENIED DATUK SHAHRIR HAD SERVED THE PEOPLE HERE, SUCH AS ALLOCATING FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOSQUES, COMMUNITY HALLS, SURAUS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE WHEN HE WAS THEIR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

+IF WE DENIED HIS SERVICES, PEOPLE WILL SAY WE ARE LYING, BUT THE JOHOR BAHARU RESIDENTS SHOULD BE TOLD AND REMINDED DATUK SHAHRIR WAS ABLE TO DO ALL THESE BECAUSE HE WAS THEN THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BN GOVERNMENT,+ HE ADDED.

+DATUK SHAHRIR NOW IS NO LONGER IN THE GOVERNMENT, SO HOW CAN HE CONTINUE WITH HIS SERVICES? PERHAPS HE CAN AFFORD TO GIVE \$200 OR \$300, BUT IF THE CONSTITUENTS NEED \$2 MILLION FOR A MOSQUE, WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN?+ HE ASKED.

ENCIK GHAFAR ALSO SAID MORE THAN 600,000 MALAYS HAD JOINED UMNO TO DATE AND THE FIGURE WAS EXPECTED TO REACH ONE MILLION BY OCTOBER WHEN THE PARTY HOLDS ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH WAS EXPECTED TO RISE TO 1.5 MILLION OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS AND HE IS CONFIDENT THE PRESENT UMNO WILL EMERGE STRONGER AND BIGGER THAN THE UMNO THAT WAS DE-REGISTERED. -- BERNAMA 2107MST 12 08 88