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MAHATHIR-UMNO

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KUALA TERENGGANU, AUG 25 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HOHAMD IS CONFIDENT THAT THE BARISAN NASIONAL WILL CONTINUE TO BE IN POWER IN KELANTAN AFTER THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IN VIEW OF UHNO'S INCREASINGLY-STRONG POSITION IN THE STATE.

HE SAID ALTHOUGH VARIOUS EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE BY THE OPPOSITION, ESPECIALLY SEMANGAT 46 AND PAS, TO GAIN POWER IN THE STATE, THE SPIRIT OF UHNO MEMBERS HAD NEVER DIMINISHED.

+JUST LIKE THE UMNO LEADERSHIP IN THE STATE, I AM FULLY CONFIDENT THAT THE PARTY WHICH FORMS THE BACKBONE OF THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO GET SUPPORT FROM ALL STRATA OF SOCIETY IN KELANTAN,+ HE TOLD REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE DELEGATES CONFERENCE OF THE KUALA NERUS UMNO DIVISION AND ITS YOUTH AND WANITA WINGS AT DEWAN BESAR KOLEJ AGAMA SULTAN ZAINAL ABIDIN NEAR HERE.

HE WAS ASKED TO MAKE AN EVALUATION OF UMNO'S STRENGTH AFTER VISITING KELANTAN YESTERDAY TO OPEN THE GUA MUSANG UMNO DIVISION DELEGATES' MEETING.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID VARIOUS EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE BY SEMANGAT 46 TO GET THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE OF KELANTAN BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE UMNO SPLINTER GROUP DID NOT HAVE MANY SUPPORTERS. --

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MAHATHIR-UMNO

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HE SAID THERE WERE MANY BANNERS AND POSTERS BEARING THE SEMANGAT 46 SYMBOL PUT UP AT SEVERAL PLACES IN GUAMUSANG DURING HIS VISIT THERE. +MAYBE THEY WERE PUT UP TO WELCOME ME TO THE PLACE,+ HE SAID IN JEST.

ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE STRENGTH OF THE BN GOVERNMENT IN KELANTAN WOULD NOT BE THREATENED BECAUSE APART FROM UMNO BECOMING STRONGER, THE BN COMPONENT PARTIES LIKE THE MCA HAD ALSO PLEDGED THEIR UNDIVIDED SUPPORT FOR UMNO CANDIDATES WHO WOULD BE CONTESTING IN THE STATE, INCLUDING GUA MUSANG, IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION.

HE SAID THE STRUGGLE OF SEMANGAT 46 WAS NOT FOR THE INTEREST OF COUNTRY, RACE OR RELIGION.

+FOR SEMANGAT 46, WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT ITS LEADER, TENGGU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH, BECOME PRIME MINISTER ALTHOUGH IT WILL ONLY WIN A FEW SEATS IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION,+ HE SAID.

AS SUCH, HE SAID, SEMANGAT 46 WAS PREPARED TO CO-OPERATE WITH POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH WERE UMNO'S MAIN ENEMIES, LIKE PAS AND DAP.

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HE ALSO **DISMISSED** THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGES TO THE **UMNO** LEADERSHIP IN KELANTAN BEFORE THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION.

HE SAID THAT WITH UMNO GAINING STRENGTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ITS **MEMBERS** BECOMING STRONGER HE DID NOT SEE ANY REASON FOR CHANGES TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IN KELANTAN.

ON ENCIK KALAKAU **UNTOL**, THE **PRIME MINISTER** SAID HIS POSITION AS FEDERAL DEPUTY **LABOUR MINISTER** WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED ALTHOUGH HE HAS QUIT **PARTI BERSATU SABAH (PBS)**.

HE SAID IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A PERSON TO BE APPOINTED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND NOT REPRESENT ANY POLITICAL PARTY -- **+PREVIOUSLY** DATUK HAJI HASSAN ADLI CONTINUED TO BE A MINISTER ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT A **MEMBER** OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY. +

DATUK HAJI HASSAN, A FORMER PAS LEADER WAS APPOINTED HOUSING AND LOCAL **GOVERNMENT MINISTER** IN THE CABINET OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER TUN HUSSEIN ONN. HE WAS EXPELLED FROM PAS AFTER REFUSING TO RESIGN AS A MINISTER WHEN PAS WAS NO LONGER IN THE BN. -- MORE
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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR **SAID** THE CHOICE OF A CABINET MEMBER WAS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PRIME MINISTER.

HE SAID HE HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE CRISIS WITHIN THE PBS **FOLLOWING** THE SUSPENSION OF SEVERAL PBS MEMBERS INCLUDING ITS VICE-PRESIDENT, DATUK MARK **KODING**, WHO WAS ALSO SACKED **AS** DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER. -- **BERNAMA**

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