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**KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 17 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THAT UMNO HAS REGAINED ITS STRENGTH AS THE LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY IN MALAYSIA.**

**THE PRIME MINISTER SAID UMNO NEEDED ONLY 40,000 MEMBERS TO MATCH THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE PARTY BEFORE IT WAS DECLARED UNLAWFUL.**

**UP TO MARCH 31, 1,281,633 PEOPLE HAD REGISTERED WITH UMNO, ACCOUNTING FOR 97 PER CENT OF THE OLD MEMBERSHIP FIGURE OF 1,326,627, HE TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE HERE, HIS FIRST AFTER RESUMING DUTIES FOLLOWING HIS CORONARY BY-PASS OPERATION.**

**EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS UMNO PRESIDENT, VISITED THE UMNO MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION CENTRE AT THE PARTY HEADQUARTERS HERE. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY UMNO SECRETARY GENERAL AND INFORMATION MINISTER DATUK MOHAMED RAHMAT.**

**DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THE UMNO MEMBERSHIP WOULD INCREASE AND EXCEED THE OLD MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THIS YEAR. -- MORE**

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**HOWEVER, THE OLD MEMBERSHIP FIGURE WAS INACCURATE AS THERE WAS DUPLICATION IN THE REGISTRATION PROCESS IN SEVERAL BRANCHES AND DIVISIONS, HE SAID, ADDING THAT THERE WERE NO PROPER RECORDS BECAUSE THE DIVISIONS WERE ONLY REQUIRED TO REPORT THEIR MEMBERSHIP FIGURE TO THE PARTY'S SUPREME COUNCIL.**

**THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS EXTREMELY SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP LEVEL, AND HOPED THERE WOULD BE CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR UMNO.**

**DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THOSE WHO REGISTERED AFTER MARCH 31 WOULD STILL BECOME MEMBERS BUT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS.**

**HE SAID THAT OF THOSE WHO REGISTERED AS MEMBERS, 200,100 HAD NOT BEEN LISTED IN THE COMPUTER. THEY WERE HOWEVER ACCEPTED AS MEMBERS BEFORE MARCH 31 HE ADDED.**

**THE PARTY HEADQUARTERS REQUIRED TIME TO LIST THE NAMES OF THE MEMBERS IN THE COMPUTER AND THEREFORE, THE SUPREME COUNCIL HAD AGREED TO POSTPONE THE BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS TO MID-JUNE.**

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**THE REGISTRATION CENTRE WAS ABLE TO PROCESS 10,000 COMPLETED FORMS PER DAY IN THE COMPUTER AND THEREFORE, REQUIRED ABOUT 20 DAYS TO COMPLETE THE WORK, HE SAID.**

**HE BELIEVED THAT MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS WERE NEW MEMBERS.**

**DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID KEDAH, TERENGGANU, PULAU PINANG AND PAHANG WERE AMONG THE STATES WHOSE MEMBERSHIP EXCEEDING THAT OF THE OLD UMNO.**

**THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT JOHOR HAD THE MOST NUMBER OF UMNO MEMBERS, ACCOUNTING FOR 80 PER CENT (216,548) OF THE 271,450 MEMBERS PREVIOUSLY.**

**KELANTAN HAD 121,973 MEMBERS OR 89.3 PER CENT OF THE OLD MEMBERSHIP OF 136,559, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID.**

**MEANWHILE, UMNO SECRETARY GENERAL DATUK MOHAMAD RAHMAT SAID THE PARTY HEADQUARTERS WAS IN THE PROCESS OF PROVIDING THE MEMBERSHIP NUMBER, OFFICIAL SUBSCRIPTION FEE RECEIPTS AND THE LIST OF MEMBERS IN DIVISIONS AND BRANCHES WHO COULD CONTEST IN ELECTIONS DURING THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS.**

**-- BERNAMA**

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