

R E252 ENG
MAHATHIR - YOUTH

BM

KUANTAN, APRIL 24 (BERNAMA) -- THE UMNO YOUTH MOVEMENT WILL BE GIVEN A MORE DEMANDING ROLE IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

HE SAID THAT UMNO YOUTH HAD ALL ALONG BEEN GIVEN A +VERY DEMANDING+ ROLE BUT THIS TIME THEIR ROLE WOULD BE MORE DEMANDING. +THAT IS WHY THIS TIME WE ARE GIVING (THEM) AMPLE EXPLANATION AND THEY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ARRANGE AN ELECTION MACHINERY TO BE ACTIVATED MUCH EARLIER AND IN A MORE ORDERLY MANNER,+ HE SAID AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE RESIDENCE OF MENTERI BESAR TAN SRI KHALIL YAAKUB HERE.

HE HAD EARLIER BROKE FAST WITH MEMBERS OF THE PAHANG UMNO YOUTH MOVEMENT AFTER A TWO-HOUR CLOSED-DOOR MEETING WITH THEM AT THE UMNO BUILDING.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT AFTER HAVING VISITED FOUR STATES (KELANTAN, TERENGGANU, PERAK AND PAHANG), HE FOUND THAT THE UMNO YOUTH MOVEMENT WAS GENERALLY PREPARED TO FACE THE GENERAL ELECTION. -- MORE

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HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT WHENEVER A GENERAL ELECTION WAS HELD, UMNO YOUTH MEMBERS COULD BE MOBILISED WITH EFFICIENCY.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS UMNO PRESIDENT, SAID THAT THE UMNO YOUTH MOVEMENT IN THE FOUR STATES HE HAD VISITED HAD BEEN FOUND TO BE IN ORDER ALTHOUGH THE MOVEMENT IN ONE OF THE STATES VISITED BY DEPUTY UMNO PRESIDENT ENCIK GHAFAR BABA HAD YET TO BE FULLY PLACED IN ORDER. HE HOWEVER DECLINED TO NAME THE STATE.

ON THE CALL BY PAS INFORMATION CHIEF HAJI SUBKY LATIF THAT INTENDING PILGRIMS SHOULD POSTPONE THEIR PILGRIMAGE THIS YEAR SO THAT THEY COULD PARTICIPATE IN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION WHICH HE SPECULATED TO BE HELD IN JUNE IN WHICH THE MONTH OF THE HAJ FALLS, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID: +IT IS VERY LIKE PAS ... IT PLACES MORE IMPORTANCE ON THE PARTY THAN RELIGION. WE ARE NOT SURPRISED THAT HE HAS MADE SUCH A STATEMENT.+

HE SAID THAT UMNO HAD LONG BEEN AWARE OF PAS' PRACTICES WHICH DID NOT ABIDE BY ISLAM AND WAS NOT SURPRISED THAT PAS HAD NOW ISSUED THE STATEMENT, PLACING THE ELECTION ABOVE THE TENETS OF ISLAM. -- MORE

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+THIS MAY WELL BE THE FINAL CHANCE FOR AN INTENDING PILGRIM TO PERFORM THE HAJ BUT BECAUSE OF THE INTEREST OF THE PARTY, PAS HAS ASKED HIM TO POSTPONE HIS PLANS,+ HE SAID.

ON ANOTHER CALL BY HAJI SUBKY THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT HOLD THE GENERAL ELECTION DURING THE HAJ SEASON, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT PAS SHOULD NOT HAVE THE PERCEPTION THAT ONLY THE PARTY SUPPORTERS PERFORMS THE HAJ.

ASKED ON UMNO'S CANDIDATES FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT HE ALREADY HAD AN IDEA OF THE QUALITY OF THE CANDIDATE TO BE SELECTED BUT HAD NOT DECIDED ON THE CANDIDATES.

THE PERSON, HE SAID, SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF SERVING THE NATION AND THE PARTY AND SHOULD HAVE A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE, POPULAR AND RESPECTED.

ABOUT 200 PAHANG UMNO YOUTH MEMBERS ATTENDED THE MEETING. ALSO PRESENT WERE TAN SRI KHALIL AND UMNO YOUTH LEADER DATUK SERI NAJIB TUN RAZAK. -- BERNAMA
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