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Mahathir-Reaction (roundup)

ALL ROUND AGREEMENT ON THE DANGER ON MONEY POLITICS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Umno veterans and leaders, heads of Barisan Nasional component parties, corporate figures and ordinary Umno members alike readily acknowledged the danger posed to the nation by money politics as emphasised by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir at the Umno General Assembly.

The feelings of the Umno president and Prime Minister on the matter was most evident as he fought to control his emotions and broke down in tears when urging party members to reject money politics in his presidential speech today.

They approved Dr Mahathir's open and firm style of confronting money politics to prevent the party from being destroyed and the nation suffering a great loss.

Veteran Umno leader Tan Sri Ghazalie Shafie said the Prime Minister's call to completely weed out money politics should be welcomed by all in order to safeguard Umno and the nation.

"The whole country is now committed to erradicate money polics," he said.

He said present members should emulate the members of the Tun Abdul Razak era who joined Umno soley to struggle for the Malays and did not seek positions in the party, and even declining when offered posts.

Former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 deputy president Datuk Rais Yatim suggested that the Prevention of Corruption Act be amended so that Dr Mahathir's wish could be translated into effective action.

He said existing regulations did not cover political corruption, adding that the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) should be given the freedom to investigate and prosecute.

"We have to show to the world that we are serious, otherwise...political speeches will remain just speeches," he said.

Rais, who rejoined Umno yesterday and was attending the party's general assembly once again after an eight-year interval, said he was elated by the wind of change towards erradicating political corruption.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib said political corruption in Umno could become cancerous and spread fast if not checked now.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said money politics could not just kill a party but also the country, and therefore it should be immediately weeded out.

He said Gerakan too faced the problem as its recently held general assembly approached.

Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu Sarawak president Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said Dr Mahathir's warning was most timely to prevent the problem from a having a greater effect on society and the country's political system

On the subject of Malay/Bumiputera cultural reformation touched on by Dr Mahathir in his presidential speech, Taib said it was a responsibility that must be discharged to ensure continued prosperity.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Dr Mahathir's message on the bad effects of money politics, corruption and power abuse was not aimed at Umno members alone but the entire country.

"It is most timely and a very serious advice," he said.

He said he agreed with Dr Mahathir that these problems should not be

allowed to kill Umno or any other party.

"Umno for us (MCA) is the backbone, a party that is important and moderate that is able to group together Malays and unite all races.

"We don't want to see something bad happening to Umno," he added.

Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Soh Koon said all political parties should take firm measures to prevent money politics from spreading.

He said Dr Mahathir's stress on the problems was a reminder to all Barisan Nasional component parties as well as businessmen.

Hicom-DRB chairman Tan Sri Yahaya Ahmad said if Umno members accepted the Prime Minister's message in the right spirit, it would ensure the success of the country and a continuation of the party's role in future.

Newly elected Umno Youth vice head Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said Dr Mahathir's speech made party members become aware of the importance of their return to the original objectives of the party's struggles.

Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said party members should not elect a leadership that was not clean and which would bring down the party and the Malay race

He hoped all members would contribute towards ensuring that a cultural transformation process was implemented by Umno in a clean and beneficial manner.

Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) president Datuk Leo Moggie said he supported Umno's move to implement a ban on all campaigning for this year's party election because too much campaigning could affect the relations within members and destroy the party.

He said it did not mean that without campaigning party members could not assess the capability of contestants.

Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid equated the political corruption that was spreading in Umno to the Aids-causing HIV virus, and called for an all-out war against it.

"(Dr Mahathir's) speech is the best and strongest antibiotic given by a doctor to treat a disease that is spreading in Umno's body," he said.

Veteran Umno leader Tan Sri Khir Johari said Dr Mahathir's comments on money politics were the boldest ever made by him for the race, religion and country.

"Dr Mahathir is not shy of exposing what's happening in Umno and this shows how serious the problem is in the party," he said.

The Prime Minister, he said, was not a person who liked to say something without concrete evidence and before gathering information from various sources.

Corporate figure Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli, who was present at the opening ceremony of the general assembly, said Malays should realise that Umno's struggles had helped to take them to a stage they had not experienced before.

He said Dr Mahathir's warning on money politics was timely as Malays had just begun to enjoy wealth and some of them were trying to gain influence the easy way.

Umno Youth's new head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the movement would move a motion calling for the inclusion in the party's constitution of the measures concerning the ban on campaigning and money politics.

"This motion is important because what's happening in the current election has exceeded the limits although the party leadership had given repeated warnings," he said.

Zahid called for a guideline on electing party leaders to avoid misuse of power, especially by those holding posts in the government, and to prevent disunity in the party.

Wanita Umno head Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said the party president's message was a meaningful reminder in ensuring that members were

not duped by those seeking to corrupt them.

On Dr Mahathir's criticism of party leaders seeking to rise up fast, Siti Zaharah said a leader should struggle for a cause sincerely and his success would be measured on that basis.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said his party did not wish to enforce a ban on campaigning for next year's party election but would nevertheless seek to learn what it could from the current Umno election.

He said all contestants for posts in MIC would be issued with guidelines which among other require them to inform the party before hand about their campaigning.

Asked if MIC was faced with the problem of money politics, Samy Vellu said it was not "because we don't have money". -- BERNAMA

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