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Mahathir-Corruption

PM REMINDS UMNO MEMBERS TO RID PARTY OF CORRUPTION

ALOR SETAR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today issued a firm reminder to Umno members at all levels to steer clear of corruption, saying the menace could destroy the party if left unchecked.

"We definitely do not want our party to be led by people involved in corruption because this will lead to the destruction of the party, government and country," he said.

"The Malays will become slaves that can be easily bought and ultimately we will be despised by other races," he said when opening the Kubang Pasu Umno division delegates conference at Dewan Jitra near here.

Dr Mahathir, who is the division chief, said the problem of corruption had persisted despite his repeated reminders to members about its danger.

The Umno president said he was sad that the Umno Supreme Council had received reports of Umno members elected as delegates to the coming general assembly asking for money from the candidates.

"They asked for money for their airfares. This really happened but we do not have enough evidence to bring them to court," he said.

Dr Mahathir said these delegates had threatened to withhold support for candidates who did not give them money.

"I am also the Home Minister and I receive many reports...do not think that I am unaware of what is going on. I can still hear and read. I know who they (the culprits) are," he said.

"Therefore, I suggest that all Umno members reject candidates who contest to represent the divisions at the general assembly by getting involved in corruption," he said.

He said corruption was damaging because a person elected to the Supreme Council by corrupt means would seek ways to recover the money he had spent.

"If this person becomes a minister, he may even sell whatever is within his jurisdiction to get money, and you can imagine the consequences if he becomes the Prime Minister.

"Everything will be gone because he will approve whatever applications as long as he is given money. That is when he is still in power but once out of power, the Malays will become slaves and Umno will be destroyed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said someone had written to his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, expressing willingness to donate RM1 million to Bakti if that person was given certain contracts.

He also related how he almost became a victim of corrupt practices during the 1987 Umno presidential contest.

"I felt very comfortable because 80 percent of the divisions had nominated me to defend the president's post while my challenger Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah only got 20 percent.

"So, logically I should have got 80 percent of the delegates votes but what happened was I only won by a majority of 40 votes," he said.

He said: "It turned out that they received money in washrooms. These people went to Kuala Lumpur to sell votes and I almost lost," he said.

"After that we all knew what happened to Umno but fortunately many people have come to their senses now and wish to return to Umno."

Dr Mahathir also urged party members to emulate Umno veterans who remained active in the party.

Among the names of Umno veterans he mentioned were Tan Sri Aishah

Ghani, Tan Sri Khir Johari and former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff.

"We are proud of them because they are willing to struggle for the party and although they are no longer holding any high government or party posts, they remain active, " he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno members should not forget what the party had done for them even when they were no longer holding posts.

"We may be smart and may work hard but without the party we will not get places in the government," he said.

The Prime Minister hoped that he would not forget the party's deeds when he retires one day although others may forget his deeds.

Osman, who is the division's deputy chief, did not attend the meeting because he was said to be overseas. -- BERNAMA

MZM ZAA YBY