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Mahathir-Leaders

UMNO HAS NO PLACE FOR CORRUPT LEADERS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged delegates to the Umno general assembly to reject all candidates in the party election who have offered bribes or those who campaigned despite the ban.

"Reject them before they destroy our party which we love, before they attempt to destroy our reform movement whose objective is to create a new Malay-Bumiputera civilisation.

"Reject them all, regardless of whether they are your friends," he said when opening the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that loyalty to friends who are immoral would destroy our struggle for race and nation.

"As a Malay, as a Bumiputera, as someone who loves his nation, race and religion, I urge all delegates to reject all candidates who have offered bribes to you in whatever form, including those who campaigned, despite the ban.

"Send them this clear message -- Umno has no place for corrupt leaders," he added.

He said that there would be no loss and the party would not weaken if those who were corrupt were not among the party's leaders or in the party.

"On the contrary, we will be stronger and be able to manage our party and our struggle more effectively and successfully, God willing," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he was sad because he had to expose these dirty linen in public and to make the appeal.

"But I believe that calamity will befall us if we do not reject those who bribed us," he said.

Referring to the ban on campaigns, Dr Mahathir said that it became all the more important because of the use of unhealthy tactics of campaigning.

"What is important is that members would be able to evaluate the candidates' performance without campaigns which deliberately taint or glorify the candidates," he said.

"In other words, the process to attain a niche in the party starts from the lower rung. Sometimes this requires a long time before the leadership qualities of a person is known and acknowledged. Today, many wish to leap frog from nowhere to occupy the highest position in the shortest time possible," he said.

He said that there would be quarters alleging that certain people would suffer since they were not able to project their capabilities.

"But even if campaigns were allowed, some will be victims as they cannot afford to campaign, while others, less talented, are capable of using specific tactics to project themselves," he said.

Actually, he said, those who were efficient, yet capable of campaigning in an unhealthy manner might be those least suitable to lead the party and the possibility is that with the current tactic of campaigning, unprincipled people and those who bribe would lead the party.

"The party will definitely be destroyed if such people continue to lead the party, especially at the highest levels. Umno will be led by corrupt leaders who acquired posts not by virtue of their ability as desired by the party and government," he said.

He said that campaigns were disallowed and a number of rules for the election was imposed to save the party as what was important and overriding

was the party, not specific individuals.

"It is alright for individuals to be disappointed but the party must survive and its integrity maintained for as long as possible," he said.

From the party's perspective, he said, the disappointment of some leaders was unavoidable, whether or not campaigns were allowed, but without campaigns damage due to disappointed candidates was not as bad as damage due to unhealthy and intense campaigns which could split the party.

The Prime Minister said he realised there was anger among candidates and members because of the decision to ban campaigns in the contest for the Supreme Council seats this year and it was alleged that no one could move because all kinds of restrictions were imposed.

"I said allegedly because the public knows there were campaigns. We know who among the candidates are active, have been using my name and that of the deputy president and even using money," he said.

He said their victory was no guarantee that action would not be taken against them later when there were sufficient evidence.

"And those delegates moving around demanding this and that will also face disciplinary action even after the elections," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that candidates not willing to accept defeat should not seek elections because what was important in elections was that all parties accept the result.

"In as much as we want the defeated to accept us as winners, so too when we lose, we should accept the winners.

"Once elections are over we should close ranks and face the challenge posed by the opposition parties," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that while no contests for the posts of deputy president and president in the party might slightly taint party democracy, nevertheless this would ensure the party's well-being.

"If I am not wrong, the intention was to avoid a campaign and contest that would split the party, as was seen in 1987.

"Remember, democracy is for the good of the party, and that the party does not exist to prove democracy is great. Democracy without a strong party is meaningless," he said.

The Prime Minister said that the new generation would inherit the party but the party they inherit should be one that is sound and safe.

"It is worthless to inherit a party that is crippled and lifeless," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that party unity would not endure if fights like that in 1987 continued.

He said that political animosity among the Malays usually spill over into the social field like Umno and PAS members who could not be friends even outside the party.

He regretted that this culture had to some extent prevailed in Umno whereby if contests for posts were held, permanent animosity would result and actions would be taken to weaken the winner by the loser and vice versa.

However, Dr Mahathir said that he was happy that the animosity following a fierce contest for the post of president in 1987 had subsided and today members of the party formed to fight Umno had returned to the Umno. -- BERNAMA

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