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Mahathir-Message

UMNO MEMBERS ASKED TO BUILD TRULY DEMOCRATIC, CLEAN PARTY

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked Umno members to use the party's general assembly next week as a fresh beginning to develop a party that is truly democratic and free of all forms of corruption and impurity.

The Umno president and Prime Minister said Umno must remain clean so that its struggle could produce a race that is noble and respected and admired not only for its achievements but also for the high civilisation that it created.

He said this in a message in conjunction with the 1996 Umno General Assembly which opens on Wednesday.

Copies of the message were distributed at a briefing for the media today by Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat at the Putra World Trade Centre ahead of the assembly.

Dr Mahathir stressed the danger of money politics which he likened to a cancer that would corrupt the national leadership.

He said Umno must stay clean and democratic because the country needed leaders of high morals to tackle the deterioration of social behaviour brought about by sudden wealth from the rapid economic development.

"Our society is being assaulted by a serious social decadence to the extent that practices such as dadah abuse, bohsia and baby abandonment have occurred.

"Included in this list are money politics and political corruption among Umno members," he said.

He said economic progress should not be restricted but efforts needed to be made to inculcate noble values and behaviour which could act as a barrier to wanton cravings.

Dr Mahathir said money politics in Umno had not been overcome despite a special general assembly being held in 1994 to tackle the problem.

In fact, the problem appeared to become institutionalised, he said.

In such a situation, he said, the party leadership is committed to stamp out money politics or it would eventually place not only the party in desperate straits and danger but also the race and nation.

Because of this, the Umno Supreme Council during the current party elections was compelled to impose strict rules to control the campaigning and money politics, he said.

All these measures were taken solely to protect democracy within the party.

"The democracy that we practise allows everyone, regardless of position and rank, the right and opportunity to be elected as a leader and to elect the leaders," he said.

Democracy in the party did not mean that only those with the money to buy votes could become leaders, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the rules to restrict the campaigning were imposed to "implant a new culture in the party, a culture based on the values of honesty and sincerity in pursuing the cause of the party".

He said Umno has succeeded in retaining power since the country's independence because there was no scramble for posts through corruption and money politics until 1987 which led to the party being de-registered.

"We have not been put off by that terrible event. Rather, we now practise dirty tactics even more openly," he said.

He was thankful that Umno could be rehabilitated after the 1987 event

but if another disaster happened to Umno again "I do not believe we can rescue it any more".

Dr Mahathir reminded Umno members that the struggle has not ended and they should not be lulled by the performance of the country to the extent of convincing themselves that no disaster could strike it.

Although the Malaysian economy is much better than before, he said, it is not sufficiently strong to progress on its own momentum and still requires guidance, nurturing and protection.

Meanwhile, in another message, Mohamed said the measures taken by the Supreme Council to curb money politics were effective so far although not totally successful.

He said the council was determined to wipe out this scourge down to its roots to ensure the party is cleansed of the disease. -- BERNAMA

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