

06/01/1997

Ghani envisions return to glory of early days

JOHOR BARU, Sun. - Johor Umno will enlist the collective wisdom of all party leaders to strengthen and regain its glory as the birth place of the party.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said this would be his number one agenda as the new Johor Umno liaison committee chairman.

Last month, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad appointed Ghani as the new State party chief. He succeeds former Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also Minister of Youth and Sports.

Ghani said his formula of collective wisdom would entail emphasis on three aspects - religion, race and country - which he noted were the three pillars on which the early Umno struggle was based on.

He said it was vital that the Umno rank and file in Johor go back to basics and adopt this formula, so that they would not deviate from the party's original objectives.

"This calls for leaders who are morally upright and clean, those who are unblemished in the conduct and character so that the party's image would not be tarnished."

"As Dr Mahathir says, there must be a cultural reformation within Umno. I understand this to mean a total eradication of money politics, power struggles and materialism among party members and leaders."

"As the new Johor Umno chief, I subscribe to the party president's stand and urge all Johor Umno members to strive for cultural reformation within the party," he said.

Ghani was speaking to reporters after opening an exhibition documenting the founding of Umno in Johor and the NST's Umno 50 Years Photo Exhibition at Plaza Kotaraya today.

Also present were State Executive Councillor and chairman of the Johor Umno 50th anniversary celebrations committee Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad, Speaker of the Johor Legislative Assembly Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan, State Secretary Datuk Shahir Nasir and NST assistant group editor Ahmad A. Talib.

Ghani noted that Johor had always been an Umno stronghold and was confident the State would maintain the status quo. Johor's present status as an opposition-free State was a testimony to this fact, he added.

He also dismissed suggestions that Johor Umno had lost its glory, pointing out that the majority of the Malays were solidly behind the party.

Even those who are not Umno members, he said, were essentially Umno sympathisers at heart.

"The people have put their trust and confidence in Umno and they look up to the leaders to steer them to greater progress and prosperity. This has been the case in the past and will continue to be so."

Ghani said he would convene his first meeting of the liaison committee after the fasting month. Asked if he planned to make any changes, he replied:

"You can expect some changes. I want to have the right people to improve the party organisation and leadership structure to strengthen the party."

(END)