

05 SEP 1997

Umno-Reaction (Round-up)

NAJIB HOPES POLICY ADDRESS WILL CLEAR CONFUSION AMONG MUSLIMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 5 (Bernama) -- Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's policy address reflects courage and sincerity and should help clear any confusion on religious interpretations among Muslims, party vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said the Prime Minister brought up the matter in his speech so that Muslims would not lose sight of their actual direction.

Dr Mahathir stressed on the question of hardwork and noble values in the quest to build a successful civilisation.

He said the Prime Minister was concerned that if Muslims adopted an extreme attitude and paid too much heed to trivial matters they would lose their direction and the objective of becoming a successful society would not be attained.

Vice-President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said people should view the speech objectively in the light of problems being faced and efforts to overcome them.

He said Islam's influence on the Malays was important and the two could not be separated as the Malays had strong faith in their religion and were rooted to it.

Banker Tan Sri Azman Hashim was happy that Dr Mahathir reminded the people of Islam's moderation and tolerance for Malaysia's success in attracting foreign investment was because of the moderation it practised.

"I am happy the Prime Minister mentioned it because many people are reluctant to say such things," he said.

He said Muslims should not adopt an extremist attitude because not only the foreigners would be uncomfortable but also non-Muslim Malaysians would also feel likewise, he added.

Wanita Umno head Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said Dr Mahathir's speech gave a clear message that "we are the ones who can determine the pattern of our culture and head for changes which are concrete."

Umno Youth head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Dr Mahathir clearly wanted the question of implementing Islamic law not to become a burden.

The Prime Minister also wanted the Malays to be far-sighted so that they would have a more open mind in all matters.

Former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said the Prime Minister's speech was a call to "change our style of bringing progress to the race."

He said the party president by again bringing up the issue of corruption in his policy address this year was stressing his firm stand on the matter.

Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said Dr Mahathir's message was very relevant because the current negative practices would erode the resilience and abilities of the Malays and others in the country in facing challenges.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam said the Prime Minister's call to the Malays to identify their direction was to ensure they were not left behind in development.

He said if the Malays who were also Muslims lost their sense of direction, they were likely to return to the pre-NEP (New Economic Policy) days.

"Umno members and Malays should reorganise their strategy and thinking towards development which they aspired," he said.

Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said the Prime Minister wanted the Malays to be earnest in everything they did.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said he was drawn to the Prime Minister's statement that Umno and the Malay race should have a culture of development through the Islamic approach.

"He stressed that the source of strength of the Malay race was Islam," he said.

"The Prime Minister was courageous and firm in stating that if Islam was seen more in the form of symbols without understanding its aims and objectives, then the religion will become an obstacle to the formation of a culture that would bring progress to the Malay race."

Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the Prime Minister was determined to create a clean, efficient and effective nation. -- BERNAMA

AZZ RON AAM