

11 MAY 1997

Mahathir-Umno

UMNO MEMBERS TOLD TO UPHOLD SPIRIT THAT PREVAILED IN 1946

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Umno members to uphold the spirit and unity that prevailed when the party was incepted in 1946 as the struggle of the Malays has not ended.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the spirit and unity shown by party members 51 years ago was the best weapon to overcome any obstacle that could threaten the survival of the Malays in future.

"For this reason it's most important that when we celebrate Umno's anniversary, we reminisce our history, we study, we use our history as guidance. We remind ourselves again of the spirit of the struggle of a race that was colonised for 400 years and which had successfully overcome all obstacles," he said.

"A race that has no history has no strength. There was only one person with a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree) yet this race was able to defeat the race that had just won the world war. The British had just won the war but we defeated them just through our spirit and unity."

Dr Mahathir said this in a keynote address at Umno's 51st anniversary celebration held at the Putra World Trade Centre here. The celebration began with a flag-raising ceremony followed by the opening of the Umno Gallery and a forum on the history of Umno.

He said at the time when Umno had just begun its struggles, there was only one Malay with a BA qualification and he was thus known as Zainal Abidin BA.

"But today if we throw a stone it's bound to hit the head of a BA holder," he said in emphasising the point that the spirit and struggles of Umno had produced many Malay scholars, and that Malays could progress so long as there were opportunities and desire.

Dr Mahathir added, however, that there had been no change in the Umno spirit and struggles towards ensuring that Malays were at par with other progressive races, notwithstanding the fact that the party was 51 years old today.

What has changed, he said, was only the focus of the struggle which started off with opposition to the Malayan Union and then demand for independence, followed by efforts to fulfil the aspirations of independence, and now towards making Malaysia a developed nation in line with the Vision 2020 objective.

"Our struggles have not changed, their focus have changed. The spirit is still required. Our struggles have not ended. There's still much to be done before we can say we are at par with progressive races in the world," he said to applause from party members.

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They included Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is the Umno deputy president, and the party's Supreme Council members.

Dr Mahathir said that while the spirit and struggles of Umno had not changed, they must be modified to be in line with the current times.

"The situation has changed. The situation before we got independence, after we became independent, and now 51 years after Umno was established and 40 years after our out country achieved independence, the situations are different.

"We therefore have to adjust our struggles to suit this situation. The problem that we are facing is that we not only have to develop our race but also to check the trend towards unhealthy practices.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said Umno was currently focussing on overcoming social problems like corruption, bohsia and loafing which he felt were not very serious at the moment but must be checked to prevent them from becoming widespread.

He said social problems like corruption must be immediately curbed before they become practices that were no longer done "below the table" but could instead be carried out "on top of the table".

Malaysia, he said, was fortunate because corruption in the country had not reached a level that was difficult to overcome, and for that reason he had to remind over and again on the need to check the activity right from now.

Dr Mahathir delivered the address just after the forum on the history of Umno which was organised by Umno Youth.

The forum was chaired by Utusan Melayu group editor Johan Jaafar, and the panelists included veteran Umno leader Tan Sri Mustapha Jabar, veteran journalist Tan Sri Abdul Samad Ismail and academician Prof Madya Mahadzir Mohd Khir. -- BERNAMA