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Mahathir-Amendments

AMENDMENTS MEANT TO PRESERVE DEMOCRACY IN UMNO, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR. Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said proposed party constitutional amendments tabled today are necessary to check abuse of democracy practised in Umno.

He said it was hoped that the proposed amendments could prevent Umno's practices and the way it is run, including elections of its leadership, from dividing and undermining the party itself.

Dr Mahathir said this in a presidential address at a day-long Umno special general assembly to amend party constitution here today.

Sixteen proposed constitutional amendments were tabled, including one seeking to abolish the awarding of 10 bonus votes to candidates nominated for the Umno presidency and vice-presidency.

" These proposed amendments have been thoroughly scrutinised but believe me that merely amending the constitution will not preserve the party's integrity or guarantee its perpetuity. What can guarantee the party's integrity and perpetuity is the members' understanding and wisdom in adopting the approved constitution.

"If all of us (Umno members) can nurture a culture putting the party and its objectives first, only then can the constitutional amendments be effective," he said.

The prime minister said by that he meant a culture which placed Umno's cause above the interests of certain candidates.

Dr Mahathir said that to some members their candidate may be the best and should he fail, so would Umno.

"This may hold true. But obsession with a candidate will not bring any good if securing victory for the candidate is done at the expense of the party.

"What is important is that we should not go overboard to secure victory for our candidate. Should he fail, we must be prepared to accept a candidate chosen by the majority," he said.

In the 30-minute address Dr Mahathir advised Umno members to close ranks and reunify upon completion of party elections, leaving no cracks among them at all for enemies to take advantage of.

"Let's get over all the tensions caused by the elections and then concentrate again on realising party ideals. Remember that in the party no friends are forever and that no enemies are permanent.

"There's no guarantee that in the coming elections party members will support the same candidates," said Dr Mahathir quoting a Malay proverb +sekali air bah, sekali pantai berubah+. (Each time it floods, the beach also changes).

Dr Mahathir reminded Umno members that Umno is not just any ordinary party.

"Umno is the backbone of the ruling BN (Barisan Nasional).

"A weak Umno means a weak BN; a weak BN means a weak Malaysian government and a weak Malaysian government makes Malaysia easily colonised," he said.

Democracy was the best political system created by mankind but like any other man-made creations, democracy has its weaknesses, in fact its evils, said Dr Mahathir.

However, he said, the good or the evil of democracy depended not on the systems, constitutions or rules and regulations.

"The good or evil of democracy depends on the practitioners of

democracy themselves. If the practitioners are efficient and know the limits and evils of democracy, then the practitioners will bring about good, " he said.

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said, if the practitioners of democracy were only preoccupied with the freedom that came with democracy and ignored the dangers, then democracy itself would destroy the practitioners without any possibility of them being restored.

-- BERNAMA

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