

22/02/1998

Change must be orderly (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said changes to the top leadership should be effected "gently", like pulling out a strand of hair from a mound of flour so that "the hair is not broken and the flour not scattered".

The Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman did not deny that leaders have to be changed but when their turn came it should be done in an orderly manner as entreated by the saying "rambut di tarik jangan putus, tepung pun jangan terserak".

"Of what good is a new leader, even if he is supposed to be better, if the party he is going to lead has been destroyed," he said when opening the annual general meeting of the People's Progressive Party at Pusat Islam this morning.

He also spoke out against the assumption that winning political party posts would bring wealth, saying position brought heavy responsibilities which not many could carry out.

Such an assumption could bring the downfall of the Government, party and nation.

"Maybe many people can get top positions, but they cannot discharge their duties as expected. As such, the process of electing a leader becomes meaningless."

He reminded BN party members that serving their party required huge sacrifices and that they should not expect any reward as they would be disappointed if it did not materialise.

The Prime Minister also said the problems of political parties could not be settled through the law.

He said if the law was used to determine party leadership which was not accepted by the majority, the leadership would not have credibility.

He said Malaysia was fortunate that the social and political situation in the country was calm despite its economic problems.

If social and political unrest were to occur in the wake of economic problems, it would worsen the problems.

"Everyone will forget that the economic problems were actually caused by the deliberate depreciation of the currency by foreigners. Their doings will be forgotten while the attention is focused on political problems."

Dr Mahathir said now market forces were said to have the right to discipline a Government that was elected by the people and that these market forces were based in other countries.

"This is a new development in defining democracy. They have shifted the goal posts again so that we cannot succeed. With this, the struggle for independence begins again.

"Thank God, up to now we are still able to resist. We have not been forced to submit to the agencies which desire to establish control over us," he said.

The Prime Minister said only those who had other priorities, like certain political priorities, would not admit that the Government's policies and approaches to develop the nation were good and effective.

"I hope no one in the BN would use the economic problems for their political ends," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad that the PPP had progressed and overcome its problems, adding that he hoped the question of leadership in the party would not weaken it.

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