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PM: Members rejecting money politics

JITRA, Fri. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the situation in Umno had shown some improvement with members showing signs of repenting and rejecting money politics and corrupt leaders.

He said cases of members lodging police reports that they had accepted bribes from certain quarters were evidence of a new courage among Umno members to stem money politics in the party.

Speaking at the opening of the Kubang Pasu Umno divisional delegates' meeting at Dewan Jitra, the Prime Minister spoke about the importance for the party to portray a clean image.

Stressing that Umno's victories in previous elections did not solely rely on the support from Umno members and that the votes from non-members were also crucial, he said it was vital for Umno to portray a clean image.

"Therefore, we don't mind getting rid of thousands of corrupt party leaders and members," he said.

Reiterating his call on Umno members to throw out corrupt leaders, Dr Mahathir said he was glad that in the current Umno divisional elections, the members had displayed strong commitment to clean up the party.

Stressing the party's stand that corrupt leaders would lose their positions, Dr Mahathir expressed concern that if the party's image was allowed to be smeared by irresponsible quarters, the non-Umno members would find the party disgusting.

"If we don't ensure that our image is clean, we might lose the people's confidence in the future."

The party president also explained why the supreme council barred its members holding posts at divisional levels from being challenged and those without divisional posts challenging incumbents.

Dismissing perceptions that the directive was non-democratic Dr Mahathir said the supreme council made the decision in the interest of the party.

The party president also reminded the members that securing positions in the party and Government was not for personal enrichment.

"We should not consider posts in the Cabinet or Exco as an opportunity to fill our pockets or buy votes to wrest political power," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the main aim of members was to achieve the party's struggle and upgrade the status of the Malays and other Bumiputeras.

Later, when asked whether the party would be reviewing its election system, Dr Mahathir said the party would be looking into some of the suggestions including the eligibility of members to contest and proposed appointment of divisional leaders by the president.

In the divisional elections, Dr Mahathir was returned unopposed as the divisional chief.

Jitra assemblyman Tan Sri Osman Aroff also retained his deputy divisional chief unopposed.

In the election for the vice-chief's post, Dr Mahathir's political secretary Datuk Saad Man also retained the post by defeating Mohd Johari Baharom.

Saad polled 263 votes compared to Johari's 87 votes.

Another candidate, Ahmad Zaini Jaafar, withdrew from the contest.

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