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Mahathir-Umno

MAINTAIN THE CLEAN IMAGE OF UMNO, SAYS PM

JITRA, March 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Umno will lose in the general election if the party is viewed as having a "dirty image" by non-Umno voters.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said this would happen if party members fail to maintain the clean image of the party.

"Umno members should preserve the image of the party so that it is not viewed as dirty by non-Umno voters during the general election," he said when opening the Kubang Pasu Umno division here.

Dr Mahathir, who is the head of the division, said it was vital for members to strive for a clean image of the party as a struggle in the interest of the religion, race and nation.

"We fear that people will detest and loath Umno if they find corrupt practices in party elections and also corrupt leaders having been elected," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there had been a deterioration of culture and values in the party and a way to restore this was to remove the people involved in corruption from the party.

However, he said that there were signs of efforts to remain clean during the current party election.

For instance, he said, there were divisions which did not elect leaders involved in money politics and there were members who were bold enough to report them to the police.

"This shows that there is a change in the culture of Umno members. There is already an awareness," he said.

However, he said, there were still some leaders who contested and without any qualms give out money to gain support.

"If we elect the person who gives us kickbacks, we will have leaders without integrity. Such people are even prepared to sell the country if they get positions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "We do not want corrupt people in the party...not only leaders but also members."

He said that although Umno had over two million members, the party was prepared to remove thousands of those who were corrupt because their membership would not benefit the party.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that the party would expel its leaders even though they had been elected, if they had been proven to be corrupt.

"Umno does not exist to give positions to people. Those who secured positions incidentally have the responsibility to ensure the party's struggles," he said.

"Believe me, we will again be colonised if our leaders are corrupt," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the country needed a party which was clean and strong especially in the wake of the current economic crisis.

On democracy in Umno, he said that the party placed emphasis on the outcome of democracy, which is the strength of the elected leaders.

He said that however, some people did not understand this and felt that democracy provided the opportunity for seeking positions.

They wanted positions not to serve the people but to "fill their pockets" and were prepared to pay for votes, he said.

Dr Mahathir was returned unopposed as the Kubang Pasu Umno division

head. The deputy head of the division, Tan Sri Osman Arof, who is the former Kedah Menteri Besar, was also returned unopposed.

-- BERNAMA

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