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Mahathir-Integrity

MAHATHIR REMINDS UMNO TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY AND UNITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno's integrity, the main reason it continues to enjoy the support of the people to lead the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, will always be preserved if its members continue to maintain unity.

The prime minister said that if Umno did not maintain unity, the party would lose its integrity and strength as a political party and the respect of the people, institutions and the country's government and administrative instruments.

"If Umno is divided and the leaders do not get the mandate and support of the party, no one in the military, police and administration will respect the directives of the government set up by the party," he said in his policy speech at the Umno special general assembly, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the party president, said Umno had succeeded in opposing the Malayan Union, in leading the Alliance government and now the BN in every general election and in administering and developing the country because of its integrity.

Its integrity was due to its strength as a political party with its leaders being able to perform their duties well because of the united support of its members, he said.

"...the united support ensures that all government decisions are fully backed by all quarters in the government and party. With this, all government servants, be they in the civil service, police or military, respect and obey the policies and approaches adopted by the government, he said.

He said that in most countries, the integrity of the ruling organisation or individual depended on the armed forces which were given special status.

"Malaysia does not have a system of a palace guard that is armed and responsible for defending the leadership. It only has ordinary military and police forces that owe no personal loyalty to any leader.

"They are professionals and act according to the law and the order of the ruling power. They will accept the authority of anyone who helms the government," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir recalled how Umno fought against the Malayan Union and led the Alliance to emerge as a respected party with integrity because of the members' united support for the leaders.

"When Umno was set up, the Malays recognised only the rulers as heads of state and leaders. The people were not involved in politics and so did not believe in a leadership made up of the people, especially to govern the whole country.

"Not many wanted to come forward to lead a political party that had to challenge the colonial masters as well as the rulers. Looking for leaders was a big problem for the Malays. When a leader with some talent and courage emerged, he was easily accepted without any contest," he said.

This continued until after the country achieved independence. The leaders were so easily accepted that there was no contest for the posts of president and deputy and vice-presidents at every annual election of the Umno supreme working council, he said.

"Once elected, no candidate was rejected because there were no factions in Umno. So Umno became strong, compact and had integrity," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in most countries that had achieved independence after a long colonial rule by the west, the failure to govern and develop

the country was due to the near absence of a prudent government.

"Sometimes they sideline democracy to set up an autocracy or dictatorship. But these governments are vulnerable to corruption of power and national development suffers," he said.

The prime minister said that so far Malaysia had succeeded in having a prudent government and the formula drawn up by Umno's founders could still be practised.

Umno had succeeded in not only maintaining the party order but also in continuing the cooperation with the other parties.

"The key to all this is an Umno with integrity," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was thus the responsibility of every Umno member as well as other Malays and bumiputeras to ensure that Umno remained strong and retained its integrity.

To do this, Umno had to stick to the two most important factors -- a proper party hierarchy and a party culture suited to democratic practice.

The prime minister said that when Umno was formed, there was nothing to say that the party president was entitled to be the prime minister.

However, Umno's success in the general elections since independence had given the party's leaders the chance to hold the post.

"This has become a tradition until many people think that what's important is to become Umno president. The prime minister's post will follow," he said.

However, he said, the Umno president would only become prime minister if Umno won in the general election.

Whether Umno would continue to win elections and lead the BN, whether the BN would continue to accept Umno if it was weak and whether the BN would retain a seat majority would depend on Umno itself, he said.

The party could not function if it did not have an orderly structure and a leader that had full support, he said.

He said that when a leader had been chosen, he should be given full support to ensure his integrity.

"He must be supported as long as he remains a leader. The loyalty is not to his person. The loyalty is to the post he holds by virtue of the constitution and through party elections.

"If he fails to maintain the party's confidence in him, he can be dropped by the party in accordance with the party constitution," he said.

-- BERNAMA

ZKS RON JK