

11 AUG 1998

Mahathir-Backbone

STRENGTHEN UMNO SO THAT BN WILL BE STRONGER- DR MAHATHIR

PULAU PINANG, Aug 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged Umno members to strengthen the party's position as the backbone of the Barisan Nasional so as to face challenges such as the current economic downturn.

The Prime Minister said the BN would be weakened if Umno did not provide a strong backbone and so far the BN had remained stable because Umno had been a strong pillar at the centre. Opening the Pulau Pinang Umno building, Menara Umno, here Dr Mahathir who is also Umno president, said the BN's strength had enabled the government to implement all development programmes it had planned.

"It is vital for Malaysia as a developing country to have a strong government because a weak government cannot implement any programme."

Dr Mahathir said due to the wisdom of past leaders particularly Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra-Al Haj, Umno had expanded and now had more than 2.4 million members.

To strengthen the party, Dr Mahathir said Umno members should recall the party's history and think "from where we came."

"If we forget from where we came, we will lose our way," he said.

The Prime Minister asked young people to understand Umno's history as this would help the country become more stable and progressive.

He said if Umno were to withdraw from the BN, the remaining 14 parties would definitely not collapse but would face problems.

Even then Umno by itself would not be able to form the government, he said.

"Hence in the BN we are safe and peaceful," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the BN should exist in its present form as each component representing a group or community would be able to defend its respective interests as all were given an equal voice.

The 21-storey Menara Umno also has a penthouse and three storeys of parking bays.

The building whose architecture merges with the environment with Georgetown and the sea in the background is the latest landmark for this city.

The ground breaking was performed by Deputy Prime Minister and party deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Dec 21, 1995.

Menara Umno won the Singapore Institute of Architects Honourable Mention Award 1998.

The building's attractive features and design have been highlighted in the May international edition of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

-- BERNAMA

AHM AAM