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Mahathir-Culture

UMNO MEMBERS TOLD TO ESTABLISH CULTURE EMPHASISING ON PARTY'S INTEREST

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Umno members should establish a culture placing emphasis on the interest of the party over the interest of individuals or certain candidates.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that if the party was sacrificed due to the obsession for a certain candidate, it would be counter-productive.

"The party is important...individuals are not. Individuals come and go but the party remains much much longer. Struggles are not over just because an individual has failed but struggles end if the party is destroyed," he said at the Umno special general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

The special general assembly was held to debate and approve 16 amendments to the constitution in efforts to consolidate the party and curb money politics in the party election.

The prime minister said that party members should close ranks after an election so that the party's enemies could not take advantage.

"Tensions during an election should be set aside and efforts concentrated on ensuring the success of the party's objectives," he said.

Umno is scheduled to hold the party election in June, next year.

Dr Mahathir said that amendments tabled at the special general assembly were aimed at protecting the party from the likelihood of democratic freedom being abused in the party.

They would hopefully prevent practices that could cause rifts and weaken the party, he said.

However, he said that the constitution alone would not guarantee the party's integrity or its continued existence.

"What can ensure the party's integrity and its continued existence are the understanding and wisdom of members in adhering to the approved constitution," he said.

Dr Mahathir, in his 30-minute speech, also stressed on the importance of Umno maintaining its integrity so that it would continue to be respected and gain the support of the people.

"In the party, what should be given priority are the party's integrity, the party's effectiveness. Victory in becoming a leader will be meaningless if it causes the party to disunite, make it weak, fail in winning the election and to form a government," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the true culture of democracy calls for election to be held in a friendly atmosphere.

He said that Umno members should also give their solid support to an elected leader.

"Support should be given to him for as long as he remains a leader," he said.

Loyalty and devotion for a leader should not be given because of his physique or personality but because of the post he held, in accordance with the party constitution and through the party election, he said.

"If he loses the confidence of the party, he could be dropped by the party, also in accordance with the party constitution," he said.

As such, he said, an election of a candidate should be based on his character, capabilities and other attributes qualifying him as a leader.

"The question of loyalty to him as an individual or leader of a faction

should not arise and influence an election," said Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

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