

19 JUN 1998

Umno - reaction (veterans)

UMNO VETERANS RAP FOREIGN POWERS, URGE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Umno veterans today appealed to party members to fully support efforts by Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his team in revitalising the economy so that Malaysia is not recolonised by foreign powers.

They urged Umno members to check the current economic crisis from deteriorating into a political turmoil as desired by foreign powers.

Former deputy prime minister Tun Ghafar Baba said it has long been known that foreign powers would like to see a leadership change in Malaysia, as mentioned by Dr Mahathir in his presidential address at today's Umno general assembly.

"Colonial powers are dissatisfied that their former colonies are now more advanced than them. They are envious of our success and are not fully sincere in helping us," he said.

Ghafar, also a former Umno deputy president, was speaking to reporters at the Putra World Trade Centre here after attending the opening of the 52nd Umno general assembly by Dr Mahathir.

Another former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam said Umno members should now regard external attempts to divide and destabilise the party as a cause for grave concern.

"During this difficult time, there's no denying that there are elements out to capitalise on the situation to split the party. This is what Umno members should be wary of. The economic crisis can develop into a political problem which can undermine Umno's position as the back-bone of the government," he said.

Musa expressed confidence that Umno members would continue supporting Dr Mahathir in his efforts to overcome the current economic crisis.

"At a time like this the leadership needs the support and I'm confident members will give their support as they have done in the past," said Musa, a former Umno deputy president and chairman of the 51st session of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights.

Speaking to reporters after the same function, Musa said the party leadership would regard criticisms raised during the meeting as members' expression of support for them.

A former party secretary-general Tan Sri Mustafa Jabar said capitalists were envious of Malaysia being a model for other developing nations.

"Hence they would try to disunite the people and destabilise the country politically. Umno members should be mindful that political turmoil is worse than an economic crisis. As such we must preserve political stability," Mustafa said.

Another veteran Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said although Malaysia did also experience cronyism and nepotism, such practices did not cause the current economic problems.

"So if they are the cause then you have to study the situation in Korea, Japan and Indonesia. They may be relevant in some other countries but not in Malaysia," Rais told reporters.

According to Rais, cronyism means giving jobs to certain parties or allocating economic opportunities to family members and friends.

But, Rais said, it would also depend on who they are.

"If one continuously gets favours or rewards one after another, this may be classified as corruption or abuse of power and resembles cronyism," he said.

"Umno must fight cronyism, corruption and other malpractices resembling abuse of power. There must be social justice in Umno's struggle. When social justice cease to exist then Umno's cause is no longer relevant," Rais added.

-- BERNAMA

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