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Dr M: Umno needs support of women

Ramlan Said; Hayati Hayatudin

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the party needed the support and contributions from women members for it to remain strong.

The Prime Minister said this was especially true for Umno as more than half of its members comprised women.

"We need their contributions or else our strength will diminish," he said after launching Wanita Umno's Gerak Mesra programme aimed at preparing its members for the coming general election.

More than 1,680 members will attend the three-day training course at 10 camps nationwide.

Dr Mahathir was earlier asked to elaborate on his speech at the function which was closed to the Press.

"Women have certain capabilities, moreover they are known to be more serious than men in things they do.

"For example, female university students pay more attention to their studies and we now have more female lawyers, engineers and doctors. Male students are preoccupied with other activities like taking part in street demonstrations."

Asked whether his compliments meant Wanita Umno would be given more seats to contest in the general election, Dr Mahathir said: "If they are qualified, we will give... It will be considered accordingly but sometimes the men do not give way."

He said Wanita Umno had not submitted any official request for more seats but had only voiced its interest in having more representatives.

Dr Mahathir said he also impressed on Wanita Umno the importance of the Barisan Nasional Government retaining its two-thirds majority.

"We want this not because we want to amend the constitution as claimed by some quarters," he said, adding that the last amendmend was carried out a long time ago.

"What's more important is to have a stable and strong Government that will not easily bow to pressure from members or parties who say that they will join the opposition if their demands are not met."

If this happens, he said the Government would not be able to function efficiently as it would always be in fear.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the death of a hit-and run victim in Penang yesterday who was brought to the Seberang Jaya Hospital but could not be treated as there was no specialist.

"Sometimes these things happen; it is not intentional. If there is no qualified doctor around, they cannot treat or refer a patient to a specialist."

He said most government hospitals were understaffed as doctors preferred to join the private sector.

"If we (students) are not prepared to study medicine, and with the number of doctors now, we really have no right to complain."

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