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Strive to maintain hold on economy, party told

Kamarul Yunus

UMNO must strive to maintain and improve its hold on the country's economy so that the party can remain in power to safeguard the interest of the Malays, its vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak said.

"Umno has proven that it is the only party that emphasises the survival and excellence of the Malays in the current rapid global economy.

"Our struggle for a more balanced society in the multi-racial community and for a better as well as Malays' excellence will continue, despite the changes of environment as the years gone by," he said at the opening of the Cheras Umno divisional meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

In the quest to achieve excellence, Najib said the Malays and particularly Umno, must have a strong foothold in various fields, especially in the economic sector.

He said Umno has been championing the Malays since its establishment and will continue to do so to improve its position and the image of Malays in the present global environment.

"Although we are still short in fulfilling the 30 per cent quota on Bumiputera's participation in the country's economy, the 20-year National Economic Plan which was implemented in 1970 had shown many achievements, including producing more established and potential Malay businessmen and entrepreneurs," he said.

And this, he said, was further enhanced under the present leadership led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Our economic growth was halted temporarily due to economic downturn.

But we are optimistic and the Prime Minister has rescued the country's economy in just about 18 months.

"We may register a slower growth at 1 per cent this year but the Government has projected that this will increase to 5 per cent next year," he said.

While the Government is trying its best to revitalise the country's economy, Najib said Umno too must do its part in assisting the Government to produce more Malay middle-class entrepreneurs and help the small-and medium-scale enterprises.

Najib also said Umno members, generally the Malays must always have the willingness to learn so that they can excel and achieve success in whatever fields.

"Knowledge now is more important than just having an abundance of natural resources. For example, Bill Gates who owned Microsoft, is a rich man because of his knowledge," he said.

He also reminded Malay students, who are studying at institutions of higher learning, of the deed and sacrifices Umno had made in ensuring their admission to universities.

"Umno protect the Malay quota into universities and assist them financially. If not, we would not be able to see many Malays in such institutions," he said in respond to calls by certain Umno members who want students to be expelled due to their involvement in street demonstrations.

However, he said the Government will follow legal procedures before taking further action on such students.

Furthermore, he said those students involved in the demonstrations are small in number and the situation is still under control.

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