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Umno-Support (Analysis)

UMNO'S SOLID SUPPORT TO DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP

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KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- The 53rd Umno General Assembly today ended with the party's clear endorsement of solid support to the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in steering the Barisan Nasional (BN) towards victory in the upcoming general election.

More than 2,000 delegates also acknowledged the charisma of the Prime Minister and the Umno president in his economic strategies, in fighting for the betterment of the Muslims and in defending the country's sovereignty by calling him "Bapa Kemerdekaan Ekonomi Negara" (Father of National Economic Independence) and "Jaguh Pejuang Islam Sejati" (True Champion of Islam).

The unanimous support of the delegates was demonstrated when the issue was put to vote. The delegates had been asked to raise their hands if they wanted Dr Mahathir to back out. None did.

"Datuk Seri, lead us, we're ready to be loyal and brave gurkhas," said Perak delegate Datuk Ramly Zahari who had proposed the vote of confidence.

Quoting "Pyae Ni Souda Nahin" (love cannot be bought or sold), a lyric from a Hindi song in the film "Bobby", Ramly said Umno members' love for Dr Mahathir was matchless.

It also showed the political will of some 2.8 Umno members nationwide in throwing their undivided support to Dr Mahathir.

Some delegates were also wanted no more of such talk of wanting to quit from Dr Mahathir.

According to political observers, the strong support of the delegates was the awaited endorsement, especially with the various accusations hurled at the Prime Minister since the sacking of his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim last September.

They viewed it as a serious setback to Dr Mahathir's critics as well as foreign power which wanted to see him topple and certain foreign media.

As a person who doesn't believe in showing off, Dr Mahathir has nevertheless succeeded in winning the hearts of the delegates with his qualities as an Islamic leader, unlike the fanatic PAS leaders.

As Federal Territory delegate Muin Abdul Manaf aptly put it, Dr Mahathir never wears a white kopiah nor sports a beard to show others that he is an Islamic leader. "His face tells it all, the sincerity in his heart to fight for the interest of his race, religion and country," he said.

Although the issue of Anwar's dismissal is being talked by everyone, it did not overshadow Umno's main agenda, that of preparing for the upcoming general election.

The public ceramah, organised by Umno last Thursday to explain the dirty tactics of PAS in using Islam and the dismissal of Anwar to further its own ambitions, had exposed the true colours of the opposition party to members of the public.

The general assembly also revealed the pretence of the opposition parties in particular PAS and Keadilan.

In the case of PAS, Terengganu delegate Haji Ibrahim Azmi Hassan revealed that how the opposition party broke its promise to Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) on the formation of the Kelantan government after 1990 general election.

Ibrahim, who was S46 vice president then, said PAS had promised S46 the Deputy Menteri Besar's post but ended taking it all.

The delegates were also told about Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's association with several foreign leaders which could

jeopardise national sovereignty.

A Wanita Umno delegate Hajah Fatimah Ismail also criticised PAS president Datuk Fadzil Nor for being close to Azizah, going all over the places when they are not "muhrim" (too closely related to marry).

After being together for four days and hearing fiery speeches, the delegates will return with greater confidence to their respective states to storm opposition strongholds.

For Dr Mahathir, he is like a general, fully equipped and ready for the battle.

"From today, it's an all out war against PAS and other opposition parties," said a delegate.

--BERNAMA

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