

11 SEP 1999

Mahathir-Titiwangsa

UMNO NEEDS TO REMAIN A STRONG PARTY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Umno should remain a strong political party so that it could continue to practise good governance.

He said that in ruling the country, Umno could develop not only the capital city but also other towns and rural areas so that the people would continue to gain much benefit from the power given to the party.

"Umno is not just a political party seeking the support of the people so that its leaders will become elected representatives, ministers and the prime minister...Umno is more than that," Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said when opening the new building of the Titiwangsa Umno division, here.

He said that Umno is a political party striving to develop this multi-racial country so that it would stand tall with the other developed countries in the world.

Also present were Federal Territory Umno liaison chief Datuk Dr Suleiman Mohamed and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

Dr Mahathir said that many people now regard Malaysia as a developed nation and no longer a developing country.

He said that the nation's rapid development was the result of the cooperation of the various races through the Barisan Nasional (BN) of which Umno was a dominant party.

Umno, he said, felt that the party was responsible to meet the needs not only of the Malays but also the non-Malays which required attention as their cooperation was essential in developing the country.

The prime minister called on all quarters to reflect on the role played by Umno in developing the country.

He said that it could not be denied that Umno, as the pillar of the BN, had succeeded in developing the country and was capable of serving the various races.

"If we could continue the services of Umno as the pillar of the Barisan Nasional, the Barisan Nasional candidates are voted in, I am confident that Kuala Lumpur will become a major and attractive city with tall and beautiful buildings and could accommodate all the Kuala Lumpur residents in comfortable homes and not become squatters," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno was set up not to undermine others to gain the support of the people.

"We were set up to be on good terms and to develop all quarters...Umno will not neglect its responsibility.

"The Umno way is that we will make clarifications to reveal the truth and they include misleading interpretations like that affecting religion, by certain people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno was saddened by the attitude of Muslims and Muslim leaders who hurl abuses at Umno and make misleading interpretations.

"We agree that they have religious knowledge and proficient in Arabic but it does not necessarily mean that whatever they say are true and correct," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there were Western orientalist professors proficient in Arabic and knowledgeable in Islam but their aim was only to find weaknesses in Islam so that they could suppress the Muslims.

He said that Umno instead upholds Islamic teachings and regard all Muslims including PAS members as brothers.

Dr Mahathir said that PAS had far deviated from its original struggles. He said that the late Datuk Asri Muda, a former PAS president, had left the party when he found some of its leaders extreme and had rejected his leadership.

"He died as an Umno member and not as a PAS member," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a visit to the Federal Territory, later attended a meeting with the Federal Territory Umno liaison body at the new building.

-- BERNAMA

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