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Mahathir-Umno

DR M REMINDS UMNO MEMBERS ON SPLIT AFTER PARTY POLLS

SEPANG, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the supreme council does not intend to restrict contests for supreme council posts in the May party elections but reminded the experience on the tendency for the party to split when there are keen tussle for positions.

The Prime Minister and Umno president said whoever wins would only garner half of the support, leading to the gradual erosion of Umno's strength.

He said the loser would retreat or feel disappointed and might support another party.

"What's the point of having reforms in Umno if it is getting smaller and smaller and was not effective in the country's politics," he told reporters at the KL International Airport here on arrival from a three-week vacation and working trip abroad.

Dr Mahathir said reforms in Umno would have no meaning if the move only destroyed the party to the extent of creating several splinter parties with their own leaders as happened before.

He said the supreme council could not do anything if the members wanted the party to be split whenever there was a election.

"In another election, the remaining members will also be disunited. Eventually, Umno will shrink into a small party," he said.

Dr Mahathir said nowadays many Umno members aspiring to become leaders gave priority to self-interests than the party's future.

"That's why they feel disappointed when they lose," he said.

Being disappointed, they would work to topple Umno and this happened at the divisional level to the extent that many party members voted for the Opposition in the November general election, he said.

"It's impossible for opposition parties to win with the support of their members alone. Umno members also voted for the parties as they were disappointed for this and that, including not being picked as a candidate," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno after having ruled the country for so long was capable of further developing Malaysia and accord the appropriate status for the Malays and other Bumiputeras.

"But if these are no longer important now, what's important is for someone to become an Umno leader and a candidate. If becoming a candidate is so important, even though he will lose but as long as he become a candidate, it's up to them, if that is named as reforms in Umno.

"Okay...I've nothing to say, I'm an old hand," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was crucial for Umno members to revert to the party's founding struggles to represent the Malays and other Bumiputeras and not to determine who should be the leader.

Some were of the opinion that if they were not leaders, the party would not succeed, he said.

"If an elected leader has no capabilities but he enjoyed the loyalty of party members, he can also be successful," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said, there would be no problems if all members abided by the party constitution by accepting victory and defeat in a contest.

"But people don't obey the constitution just because there is a constitution... when they contest, if they lose and feel disappointed, they'll leave the party and form another party," he said.

He said the Malay race was not secured if Umno members gave preference for their selfish aims over and above the interests of the race, country and party.

"Our achievements all these while will not only stop where it is now but will be ruined again as we should not think we're strong enough and can do anything we like now because we're clever and have degrees.

"There's no need for politics and (political) parties, we can fend for ourselves," he said.

Dr Mahathir said contests would certainly have an effect on the party as what happened in 1987 leading to the formation of Parti Melayu Semangat 46.

On the possibility of candidates entering the fray as a team, he said, the supreme council would discuss on the matter and make a decision.

"I need not give my opinion as it may influence the thinking of others," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AR TS