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Muhammad-PM

PM'S STATEMENT IS A WARNING TO MALAYS, SAYS MUHAMMAD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhamad Taib said today the statement by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that a non-Malay could become Prime Minister of the country should be construed by the Malays as a warning.

He said it was a reminder to the Malays whether they were prepared to lead the country in future or otherwise.

"If the Malays are not prepared to become an advanced race in future, then there are others who would lead us," he said when asked to comment on the prime minister's statement after a Maulidur Rasul function, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president and chairman of the Barisan Nasional, when officiating the MCA general assembly here yesterday said non-Malays certainly had the opportunity to become prime minister if every community accepted it.

The reminder was good so that Malay leadership at all levels would realise and strive to ensure that they were strong and relevant at all times and could discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Meanwhile, Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein described Dr Mahathir's statement as far-sighted and his (Dr Mahathir's) desire that Malaysians would one day be free from the clutches of racial chauvinism.

However, he said it was not yet time for the statement to become a reality as long as there were still irresponsible groups who were exploiting racial and religious issues for political gains.

"Umno Youth takes the stand that the question of the Umno president becoming prime minister and Barisan Nasional president as is currently practised is something that cannot be compromised on," he told reporters when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement.

Party Gerakan welcomed the statement and said it demonstrated Dr Mahathir's moderate nature and broad-minded attitude, which must be admired and adopted by all Malaysians.

However, it must be accepted that this political philosophy might take time to be accepted by everyone and it must be allowed to evolve and be assimilated by all races without compulsion, Gerakan vice-president Dr S. Vijayarajam said.

"We are happy that Dr Mahathir has taken the first step by sounding it out and there will come a time when boundaries of ethnicity will be transgressed by a national identity," he said in a statement.

He said in this respect Malaysians were now on the right path, and with sincere and unhurried guidance, there could only be optimism for the eventual creation of a truly Malaysian nation.

In KUANTAN, Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob described the statement as a reflection of Dr Mahathir's desire to see the people live in peace and harmony and having mutual trust.

He believed the idea was raised by Dr Mahathir to gauge the extent of solidarity among the various races in the country.

"In short, the prime minister wants to create a new thinking among the Malays and non-Malays on what will happen in future which no one can clearly foresee right now," he said.

"For the moment, I don't think the time has come (for it to materialise). This may be a reality in the long term...But it is not something impossible, if there is collaboration between the Malays and non-Malays, why not?" he said.

He said the people should not accuse the prime minister of attempting to sell Malaysia or to look for political mileage. It was aimed at creating awareness among Malaysians that the position could one day be held by a non-Malay.

-- BERNAMA
SFY/AKT/SHS AO