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Mahathir-Umno

UMNO NOT DANCING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S TUNE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno members do not have to "dance according to other people's tune" by resorting to slander and lies but instead undertake tasks according to what their conscience says.

"We'll continue our struggle according to our own ways as we believe we're on the side of the truth. We need not have to lie to gain the support of others," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said this in his adjournment speech at the Umno special general assembly here today to amend its constitution.

Umno, he said, was far different from its opponents who had to resort to lies to secure support.

"For instance, according to the opposition, I am already dead four times over...but I'm still alive. Recently it was asked over the Internet why Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (appointed Supreme Council member) chose to keep quiet whereas he should be working to topple (Umno deputy president) Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi whom he dislikes.

"There are so many lies, including one suggesting that I dread the moment a particular person is out of jail," Dr Mahathir said in apparent reference to his jailed former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Dr Mahathir also said not many government officers supported the opposition. On the contrary many remained on the the government side although they were not vocal and glaring in displaying such support.

"They continue implementing government instructions without donning the symbols and logos of the ruling party. It sufficed by following government instructions," he said.

The prime minister said that from experience, the government employees that he met with, be they senior officers or low-rung workers were not vocal in expressing support but they remained with the ruling party.

"As such Umno members should not make statements that disappoint government servants," he said.

Dr Mahathir said even Umno members did not support party candidates out of dissatisfaction over the selection of candidates.

Dr Mahathir asked Umno members to support the party and not individuals.

"We must remember that we're not members of Awang's or Khamis' party but of Umno. That's all I ask of you, not much really," he said.

Dr Mahathir raised this when explaining why the Umno leadership did not empower Umno divisions to select party candidates for the general election.

Dr Mahathir said screening candidates for general elections was difficult and often posed problems for him, as party president, in making decisions.

He said those unhappy for not being picked would regard him as having made the wrong choice.

"Some divisional chiefs were not nominated to contest to be MP while those nominated wanted to consolidate their positions. They have own supporters and sometimes send messengers to meet and persuade me to choose their men," he said.

Dr Mahathir said while the Umno leadership could still empower party divisions to select election candidates, it feared that the divisions themselves could not agree on who should be the candidates.

He thanked delegates to the assembly for endorsing the amendments despite speculated objection from certain quarters earlier on.

Dr Mahathir also also thanked Umno vice president and constitutional amendment committee chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin for seeing to it that the exercise achieved its objective.

Dr Mahathir also recorded appreciation for Umno permanent chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah's willingness to conduct the assembly despite of being unwell.

-- BERNAMA

ARA ZS MAI RYN