

30/05/2001

Dr M sets goals for Umno Youth

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked Umno Youth members to accomplish three tasks which could play a major role in determining the party's performance in the 2004 general election.

The three tasks are to set up Umno Youth operations rooms at all branches, to increase Umno's membership and to ensure that all the movement's members are registered as voters.

The Prime Minister said if the tasks were fulfilled, it would display the movement's members' commitment towards Umno's struggles.

"This move is a practical test besides just shouting the war cry Hidup Melayu (Long Live the Malays). It's quite an unromantic way but this is how we can determine whether Umno Youth members are sincere in their struggle."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a special assembly organised by Umno Youth at the Putra World Trade Centre here today. Also present was party deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Some 5,000 Youth members including executive council members, division heads, their deputies and division committee members, attended the event.

Dr Mahathir said no allocation would be given for setting up the operations rooms and the branches would have to look into ways to finance the centres.

"I hope that I would be able to visit the branch operations centres during my next visit to the divisions," he said during his one-hour speech.

Dr Mahathir also called on Umno Youth members to fully prepare themselves and have a good knowledge of democratic principles.

"You all (Umno Youth leaders) would inherit the party one day when the older generation is no longer around.

"And thus, you should equip yourselves with the necessary knowledge including how to react when winning or losing Umno elections.

"We have adopted democratic principles and determine whom we want to elect as our leaders. But sadly, we have failed to understand how to use the democratic system that we have selected."

Dr Mahathir also reminded Umno Youth members not to resort to the practice adopted by some party members like indulging in money politics.

"We are stern in fighting money politics and that is why we are taking stern action against those found guilty of practising money politics.

"All quarters must support our move because the perpetrators are promoting an unhealthy and negative culture which must be prevented from spreading as the damage caused by their actions is too wide for us to cover."

Dr Mahathir said when people are influenced by money, they would resort to doing just about anything.

"Today we are willing to sell our votes during the party elections and one day later, we would even sell our votes during the general election. In that way, we would end up losing our self-dignity.

"Just because there is no sufficient evidence against certain people, it does not mean that we cannot take action against those guilty of money politics."

He also urged Umno Youth members not to follow the attitude of some senior members who could not accept their defeat in the party elections.

"When they lose, they are disappointed and do not want to carry on with the party's struggles and some even leave Umno.

"I hope that this would serve as a lesson to the Umno Youth members not to indulge in such things.

"The winners should not totally ignore the losers. On the other hand, those who have lost should also be willing to close ranks and work with the winners."

Dr Mahathir also requested the young leaders to be patient while waiting for their turn to take over the party's leadership.

"Your turn will surely come and you must prepare yourselves to lead the party and show a good example."

Dr Mahathir urged Umno leaders at all levels to go to the ground and mix with the people.

"While we are there, we need not travel in our luxury cars. We can leave the cars at home. There is no need to impress the people."