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Umno-Foreign (Reaction)

DR MAHATHIR'S OPENNESS MAY LEAD TO FURTHER UNITY OF THE MALAYS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jun 21 (Bernama) -- The openness and frankness shown by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when discussing issues pertaining to the Malays could be a powerful tool in uniting the group as well as to ensure greater progress and prosperity of the country.

Secretary-general of the General People's Party Republic of Yemen, Dr Abdul Karim Al-Iryani said the lengthy speech by Dr Mahathir to mark the opening of 55th Umno general assembly today managed to touch every aspect of internal issues.

"I was impressed that he was very frank with the Malays and I think such frankness and openness will cement party unity as well as the Malaysian people at large," said Dr Abdul Karim, who was also the former Prime Minister of Yemen.

As one of the greatest Islamic leaders, Dr Mahathir had always stolen the limelight such as in Islamic conferences with his credibility as a great defender of Islam, confrontor of enemies of Islam and also a great supporter of the Palestinian people, making him a household name in Yemen, said Dr Abdul.

"Dr Mahathir is so good in addressing international issues in international conferences and I deeply enjoy and, at the same time, am impressed when listening to his words and advice to his own people," he added.

Dr Abdul was one of 59 foreign representatives from over 20 countries who attended the opening session of Umno assembly.

Among foreign political parties represented were the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party Republic of Iraq, Communist Party of Cuba, Jamiate Islami Afghanistan, Communist Party of China, Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Workers Party of Korea from North Korea and the African National Congress from South Africa.

Meanwhile, Mufta Ali Mohamad from Libya said Dr Mahathir's speech clearly reflected the importance of Umno to the Malay people.

"His words contained many ideas which reflected that he is eager to see the Malaysian people prosper and progress as well as in caring for their social welfare," he added.

Meanwhile, Borhan Ariffin from the Singapore National Malay Organisation (PKMS) said Dr Mahathir's remarks criticising the rebellious attitude of those who indulged in the reform movement was appropriate.

"What was stated by Dr Mahathir (on the reform movement) is right because reforms were actually carried out during the struggle against the Japanese and British imperialism in the past," he said.

He said the Malays should not think too much about how to rebel or carry out reforms but should instead strive to strengthen the Malays.

The representative of the Parti Kebangsaan Bangsa (PKB) Indonesia, Dr H.L Misbah Hidayat said Malaysia's move in not seeking financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the financial crisis of 1997 impressed the Indonesians.

"Our (Indonesia's) request for assistance from the IMF has forced us to be dependent on the foreigners for ever," he said, adding that Indonesia's foreign debt has now reached USD200 billion.

-- BERNAMA

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