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Umno-Reaction

DR MAHATHIR'S MESSAGE A WAKEUP CALL TO MALAYS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's address at the 55th Umno general assembly today is a wakeup call to the Malays to quickly reunite, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said.

Dr Ling said the president's wide-ranging speech, which touched on many subjects including information technology, education and politics, conveyed a very strong message to the Malay community -- that it was important for them to fully support Umno and preserve unity.

"And as far as the MCA is concerned, Umno has been the backbone of BN (Barisan Nasional)... we will like to see a strong Umno, which means a strong BN," he told reporters after attending the opening of the assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Describing the speech as "very good", Dr Ling who is also Transport Minister said peace, stability and harmony, as stressed by the Prime Minister, was important for Malaysia's progress and to realise the vision of becoming an industrialised nation.

People's Progressive Party President Datuk M.Kayveas said Dr Mahathir's speech also conveyed a message to the Malays to reassess themselves in all areas.

He said the government and Umno had done everything possible for the betterment of the Malays including providing many privileges and opportunities to progress.

"In short, almost everything was given... there can't be anything better, if they are condemning and looking to change the government, it will bring them nowhere," he said adding that the opposition was not matured enough to run the country.

Kayveas, who is also the Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister, said that Dr Mahathir's speech also asked the Malays to be grateful to Umno and Barisan Nasional for its sacrifices and contributions.

He said another message was for the Malays to become competent in English to face the advent of globalisation and to avoid being bullied by anyone.

Meanwhile, Puteri Umno Chief, Azalina Othman Said said the keynote address clearly indicated that the president was serious about re-engineering Umno.

He said what was being conveyed by Dr Mahathir was a simple issue which had direct link with Malays irrespective of the party they belonged to.

"He talks on a simple issue - about the Malays being divided, being used, being the agent of enemy - which applies to all Malays regardless of their party and he had put it in good context.

"I think what's more wonderful is that he did not even tell us what to do. He just left it to us to make that choice. He is passing the burden to delegates and all Malays out there to decide what they want to do about it," he said.

When asked her reaction on the fact that the president used the word "haprak" (idots) several times in his speech, Azalina said: "I like it, it's new and better than "penyangak" (rogue) which he used last year."

MCA vice chairman, Datuk Chua Jui Meng said by touching on basic issues such as education and the economy, Dr Mahathir wants the Malay community to improve their status to become capable Malays with high integrity.

He said Umno leaders harboured no intentions of seeking popularity but

just wanted the Malays to come to a stage of self-realisation.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said: "I feel Dr Mahathir's speech served as a medicinal booster for the Malays and Umno in general, and the pill should be consumed for the future survival of the race."

He said the Umno president had once again demonstrated his capability not only to lead Malaysia but also to inject fresh ideas for Umno in its political struggle for the country.

Meanwhile, Umno Secretary-General Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said the Malays should realise that they cannot depend on traditional factors to meet future challenges.

Umno Vice President, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the speech, if examined carefully by each Umno member and Muslim, is actually a shot in the arm which can boost the party's struggles and progress besides empowering them to face any future challenge or threat.

"I noticed that the President's speech was extraordinary in that timing was right and his views were frank. He was outspoken in unveiling the real problem besieging the progress and development of the Malays.

"We are not prepared to work hard and we almost sold the nation to others. If we want to avoid history from repeating itself, then we should shed all bad practices," he added.

Wanita Umno Chief, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said: "I am happy the President reminded us to get back to basics and to remember our roots as what we have today is not a result of a windfall."

She said if the Malays forget their roots and humble beginnings then there was a possibility that they could return to the days of when they were looked down upon.

"The message is very relevant and clear, if there is still no realisation after this I feel Umno will then really face problems," he said.

Rafidah said the Prime Minister's call for the Malays to unite and not to forget their struggles was something Wanita Umno was very much aware of.

A delegate, Dr Ku Abdul Rahman Ku Ismail, who is also the political secretary to Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar described the Prime Minister's speech as a challenge to the Malays to rise to the occasion and to realise that the special privileges of the Malays would not remain forever.

He said Malays must accept Dr Mahathir's criticisms sincerely and constructively.

The President of the Peninsular Malay Students Association, Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim said Dr Mahathir's remarks was the answer to the confusion which had been created by the opposition in the minds of the younger generation especially students.

Suhaimi said Dr Mahathir's message would be conveyed to student leaders during the Malay Students Convocation which would be opened by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on July 13.

Johor Bharu Umno Division Deputy Chief Khaled Nordin said Dr Mahathir has made the Malays realise Umno's role and what would happen to the Malays if Umno was no longer in power.

Khaled, who is also Deputy Works Minister, said if the speech was really understood by the audience, a majority of the Malays would accept the truths contained in the speech.

"The question is the Malays are confused, maybe the leaders do not publicise it...but if it is explained well then the people will accept," he added.

Former Umno Youth Chief Tan Sri Rahim Thamby Chik said the President's address was clear that he wanted a change in mindset among the Malays in

order for them to be able to enter the corporate world effectively.

"We cannot observe old and outdated values and sell our rights, become lazy and lack initiative," Rahim said.

He added that Dr Mahathir's message was very important in that he pointed out that a higher level of unity and stability can only be achieved if the Malays succeed in controlling the economy.

The advisor to the Indian Muslim Congress of Malaysia Mohamedumar B. Peer Mohamed said Dr Mahathir's speech which touched on racial integration proved that Malaysia had managed to create smart partnership among the races.

"And its benefits.. the people have been able to enjoy harmony, which is not the situation in other Asian countries," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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