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Ibrahim asks Dr M for forgiveness over gathering

"IT wasn't my mistake when two or three speakers deviated from the topic. So, please do not blame me."

That was the remark made by Malaysia Action Front committee member Datuk Ibrahim Ali when debating the address by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He was apparently referring to the controversial MAF gathering early this year, which was seen by many as critical of the Government.

Ibrahim, a former supreme council member, also took the opportunity during his 20-minute speech to ask for forgiveness from Dr Mahathir "for my failure to clear your good name and Umno's during my campaigns (in Kelantan)".

"I went to all the divisions (in Kelantan) to clear your name but I failed," he said, attributing his failure to the "unenthusiastic Umno members".

Ibrahim also called on the Government to retain the Internal Security Act for peace and stability of the country. He said the Government should not heed the calls by the Opposition and other quarters. "The Act is vital for the country and the people. Singapore still retains its ISA. In some countries, the people disappear just like that and cannot be traced."

Ibrahim also touched on the lukewarm response among the younger generation of Malays to joining Umno, saying that this happened as most Umno members did not show enthusiasm and commitment in discharging their duties. He also said it was not right to label members who criticised the party for its own good as anti-party.

Ibrahim also said the party should not blame divisional chiefs if their "anak buah" (followers) supported the Opposition.

Ibrahim had the audience in stitches when he "warned" them not to leave their seats or go to the toilets when he took the rostrum.

Immediately after the "warning" was issued, Dr Mahathir pretended to leave by standing up.

This brought laughter to the hall.

Ibrahim also called on the delegates to appreciate the contributions and views of Umno veterans such as Tun Ghafar Baba.

"When Ghafar gives his opinions, he should not be labelled as orang tua tidak sedar diri or anything to that effect. We must listen to him and other veteran leaders who have contributed immensely towards the party." Ibrahim also called on Umno Youth to make its presence felt and not just resort to rhetoric or be rigid.

"The movement should be focusing on campaigns and activities to counter Pas' allegations. Leave the community work and projects to Puteri Umno. If you are not able to do this, consult the movement's former leaders for advice or views."

On Pas, he said the party was responsible for "destroying Muslims and the country".

"When the Government wanted to amend the constitution, Pas went to the extent of holding roadshows to confuse the people. Now, it is bent on amending the State constitution to reduce the power of the palace."

On education, he proposed to the Government to award scholarships automatically to Malay students who excelled in their studies.

Another speaker from Johor, Khairul Azmi Mohamad reminded delegates not to forget their destiny in the world.

He also advised them not to overly indulge in their daily activities that neglect their obligations to the party and the community.

Khairul Azmi said that while the country was bracing itself for external challenges like globalisation and the information technology era, the internal challenges of the party were the sole responsibility of the members.

He said Dr Mahathir was very clear in expressing the party's strength and weaknesses and the steps which should be taken to counter them.

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