

29 MAY 2001

Mahathir-Youth

MAHATHIR CHALLENGES UMNO YOUTH TO ACCOMPLISH THREE TASKS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today challenged Umno Youth to accomplish three tasks so as to gauge the depth of the movement's commitment to the Umno cause.

One task is setting up branch-level operations rooms while the other two, enlarging Umno membership and ensuring that Umno Youth members are registered voters.

In issuing the challenge when he addressed more than 5,000 Umno Youth members at the Putra World Trade Centre here, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said no allocation would set aside for setting up the branch operations rooms.

"This is a practical test besides just shouting the war cry Hidup Melayu (long live the Malays)..it's quite an unromantic way yet we still can determine whether Umno Youth is committed or not," he said in his key-note address.

Dr Mahathir said he would take time to visit Umno Youth branch operations rooms when touring Umno divisions nation-wide.

During the hour-long address, Dr Mahathir also reminded the youth wing members to have good grasp of democratic principles in preparing themselves to inherit Umno.

This includes the principle relating to winning and losing in Umno elections, he said.

He said losers in the recent divisional elections, including those from the youth and women's wings, should not resort to leaving Umno but instead continue to pursue the party's cause from within.

Dr Mahathir said Umno's firmness in censuring members found indulging in money politics deserved all-round support as the perpetrators were only promoting a negative culture among party members.

"While the action against them may appear harsh, the damage they inflicted on the party and our race is even greater," he said.

Early this month the Umno Supreme Council endorsed the party Disciplinary Board's finding and action against six members for resorting to money politics in recent party polls. The board nullified the election of three of them as division chiefs.

The prime minister said: "If money is misused to influence certain outcome, then we will be the victims because being so hard up for money we are willing to trade off our dignity.

"Today we may sell votes in party polls. Once it becomes a habit, we may even sell off our votes in the general election and pawn off our dignity," he said

Dr Mahathir also reminded the vanquished in recent party polls to close ranks and support the victors who should in turn avoid going on a witch-hunt against the losers.

According to Dr Mahathir, the contest for party positions should not be treated as a personal one as the election process was to ensure that Umno has in place an echelon of efficient and selfless leaders.

He said the younger generation in Umno would eventually take the reins of the party but not before they were amply prepared for such role.

Dr Mahathir said Umno would also see to it that its leaders at all levels get down to the ground to meet the people.

"We shall see to it that they go to the ground but need not take their limousines along. We can leave the luxury cars at home. We do not have to

impress so long as people feel easy to meet us," he said.

In his speech Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the movement fully backed the party leadership's earnest move to rid Umno of money politics and welcomed action against any youth wing members implicated.

Hishammuddin said Supreme Council members, Umno MPs, assemblymen and ministers should also answer the call for party members to go to the ground.

"We have to change the culture of blaming others with Umno Youth always being the target...If we are really sincere in strengthening Umno, it should start at all levels," he said.

Hishammuddin also directed Umno Youth members to place themselves in election mode and newly-elected youth division chiefs to activate their offices as well as branches under them.

"We want fresh state Umno Youth chiefs who will be named soon to look after their charges well and not capitalise on their position only for enriching themselves or for self-promotion as party candidates for the next general election," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth had targeted to have one million members by the next general election.

Existing figures showed that the movement currently has 850,000 members but this would be verified further to ascertain the actual number, he added.

-- BERNAMA
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