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Mahathir-Warning

MAHATHIR CONFIDENT MALAYS WILL HEED HIS "WARNING"

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said some Malays are bound to be unhappy over his speech yesterday criticising their attitude which caused them to lag behind in many fields, including education and the economy.

However, the Prime Minister expressed confidence that a lot of people would heed his "warning" that they must do the appropriate thing to succeed.

"There are some people who do not like to be told the truth. They will be unhappy. They have to be told that they are not doing the right things, that they must do the right things," he told reporters at the end of the second day of the 55th Umno general assembly here, today.

The Umno president was responding to queries on whether his speech would be counterproductive and cause the party to lose support.

He said: "As a leader, if I am going to follow them, then I am a follower. I have to lead. I have to tell people this is the way to go."

Dr Mahathir said it was all right that a lot of people did not like him and that he could do nothing if they would not vote for him.

Dr Mahathir also said not many Umno members were holding several key positions in key government-owned agencies.

He said former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, in fact, had taken the step to limit the number of directorships a person could hold.

"As such many have resigned, among them Mirzan (Dr Mahathir's son) who is said to be director of more than 90 companies and earns RM900,000 in allowances a month," he said.

When debating the presidential address at the assembly today, Kelantan delegate Datuk Ibrahim Ali called for a limit to the number of posts an Umno member could hold outside the party so that the member could concentrate on grassroot duties.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said all quarters in Umno, including ministers, did indeed get to the ground to be close to the masses.

However, compared to his visits to the ground, those made by them and the other party members did not get wide media coverage, the prime minister said.

The prime minister suggested that the media give appropriate coverage when ministers get down to meet the people.

He was also asked about a proposal to defer Umno Supreme Council elections, originally due in 2003, to until after the next general election in 2004.

Dr Mahathir said it still too early for the party to make a decision on that.

"This is something that we will consider certainly," he said.

He also dismissed suggestions that Umno Youth was in a weak position now.

On Vision 2020, he said the plan to turn Malaysia into an industrialised nation would be continued even after he was no longer leading the country.

"Vision 2020 is not for me. In fact by 2020, I'll be hovering over the country watching whether it is being implemented or not.

"If I am not around, (Deputy Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will take over and he is well acquainted with Vision 2020," Dr Mahathir added.

-- BERNAMA
MAM ZS RYN