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Mahathir-Leaders

UMNO TO PASS ON LEADERSHIP TO EFFICIENT AND CREDIBLE YOUNGER SET

MELAKA, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Umno will ensure that its younger set of efficient and credible stalwarts will take over party leadership in a smooth power transition that will see the Umno cause flourishing further, said Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The current leaders may be rather too old to be at the helm and will have to make way to the credible and efficient ones among the younger generation to carry on the Umno struggle and make us become a developed nation by 2020," he said.

As such, he said, it was Umno's hope that the party would be able to garner stronger support from among the younger generation.

"This is because what Umno is fighting for now is to be passed on to the younger generation who will take over and perpetuate its cause...what we are working on now is for the nation's future," Dr Mahathir said when opening the RM12-million eight-storey Graha Umno here today.

At the same time, Dr Mahathir said Umno's elder generation should also be well-remembered because of their immense contribution towards the Umno cause.

"We envisage a synergy of the strength of the old and the young with the young making the most of the experience of the old to sustain Malaysia's progress and independence from any form of usurpation," he said.

At no time should the Umno leadership be weak and instead its strength should be consolidated from time to time for it to be able to deliver promises made to the citizens and realise their aspirations, said Dr Mahathir.

Umno was able to remain an anchor party because it enjoyed the support of both the Malays and the other communities in multi-racial Malaysia, he said.

"We are successful because the masses support us...this party has done much to the country, to its multi-racial people and obviously to the Malays. The proof is that today Malaysia has emerged as an advanced nation among developing countries," he said.

Malaysia today served as a model to the third world and the developed countries inevitably have to acknowledge Malaysia's capabilities as well as that of its people and the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition of which Umno is the lynch-pin, he said.

"For this reason, the Umno cause has got to go on to serve the country's need," Dr Mahathir said adding that this was the time for the people to see Umno reinforced because of its unfinished struggle.

The tasks ahead were ever more challenging given continuous attempts to re-colonise the country although it had gained independence, he said.

"Such re-colonisation attempts are ongoing..not through military deployment or invasion like that staged by the Portuguese. It is now done through the use of economic power to wrest control over our country," he said.

"They will make use of Malaysians as their tools through the various organisations that get their aid to weaken the Malaysian government," he said.

The prime minister said these powers would employ whatever means available to derail the country's growth economically and politically gained over the 43 years of independence.

"We have seen governments of several countries toppled through the

doing of foreign powers...at times the change in government did bring good but there were those that did not all benefit the nations involved. Instead only anarchy prevailed after that, leaving no room at all for reconstruction," he said.

Malaysians should be wary not to let such a fate befall this country, Dr Mahathir said.

"Umno and its coalition partners in the BN remain the vanguard of our defence. ..Umno will defend Malaysia's independence and build the country so that, while other nations tumble, Malaysia stands strong as an independent country," he said.

The Graha Umno, located in Jalan Hang Tuah here and operational since April last year, houses a bank and the Melaka International Trade Centre.

Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohamed Ali Rustam and Umno Supreme Council members were among the 3,000 guests present at the opening ceremony.

Following that the Umno Supreme Council held its meeting there, its second outside Kuala Lumpur, after the one held in Ipoh last year.

-- BERNAMA

MOZ RYN