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Umno-Najib

RETHINK STRATEGIES TO MAKE MALAYS SUCCESSFUL, SAYS NAJIB

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib is hopeful that the Malay race will be eventually successful but this will be achieved only after a long struggle.

He said there was a need for Umno -- the torch bearer of Malay survival -- to rethink its strategies, including in terms of what it had done right and where it had gone wrong, in fighting for the Malays.

"I don't think the results can be seen in a short period of time. But let's get on with it because if the Malays don't progress, they will be left behind.

"The changes that are taking place in the world are so fast, so radical. The `train' is moving very fast and we must be on board this train," he said in an interview with Bernama in conjunction with the Umno General Assembly 2002 which kicks off on Thursday.

Najib said the Malays must revolutionise their minds and change the way they do things to enable them to reach greater heights.

"We need not necessarily discard all the privileges of the Malays. What we have to do is to give a reasonable 'injection' or a new jolt so that the Malays realise that they have to act more positively," he said.

Najib, who is Defence Minister, was answering questions on the direction of the Malay race following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement last week that his great disappointment was that he had failed to change the Malays.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, was reported as saying that he was frustrated with the Malay attitude of always depending on aid, subsidies and special privileges.

His statement was closely related to several decisions of the government which were viewed as threatening the position of the Malays.

These included opening the Mara junior science colleges and matriculation programmes to the non-Malays, teaching Science and Mathematics in English and using meritocracy for entry into public institutions of higher learning (although the latter move had resulted in more Malay students gaining places this year).

Najib said the changes were made because the government felt that the Malays' achievement should be raised further to prepare them for an increasingly competitive environment.

"The acceptance of the Malays (to change) depends on how we can convince them that the change is for their own good.

"It also depends on an implementation mode that is acceptable to our society," he said.

Asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's frustration, Najib said he had heard the prime minister speaking about it but not openly.

He said that based on what Umno and the government had done in terms of policy, allocations and the institutions provided, the the Malays should have achieved more than they had now.

Najib said Dr Mahathir's remarks on the situation of the Malays had strengthened his (Najib's) resolve to address the woes affecting the race.

This called for a strong commitment and perseverance on the part of the Umno leadership.

"We cannot give up our struggle. I think it's incumbent upon us to rethink our policies, our strategies, so that, given the new environment, we can ensure a much better rate of progress for the Malays," he added.

To another question, Najib said the Malays seemed to be gaining confidence in Umno and the decline in the support for the party in the 1999 general election was a thing of the past.

"They want to look forward and they believe that Umno is the right vehicle to unite the Malays to bring them to a brighter future," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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