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Mahathir-winding-up (Malays)

UMNO WILL NEVER BETRAY THE MALAYS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today assured the Malays that Umno would never neglect or betray them even though the government had adopted several new approaches, seen as jeopardising their interest.

However, he said the Malays must learn gradually to be self-reliant and not to depend on the government for assistance to achieve level of progress at par with other races.

"We must remember that people who depend on assistance always will become weak. Once we are used to go about on crutches, we will become helpless without them.

"That is why we must gradually learn to walk with crutches," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, when winding-up the debate on the final day of the three-day Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade (PWTC) here.

He was referring to the government's decision to provide 10 per cent quota to non-Bumiputeras in Mara Junior Science Colleges (MRSM) and the matriculation programme, both are exclusively for Bumiputera students.

"This will be done without neglecting our children. Umno will never betray the Malays," he said.

On the use of the meritocracy system for entry into institutions of higher learning (IPTA), Dr Mahathir said that this year 69 per cent of those who gained places were Malays but this did not mean that they should rest on their laurels.

They should instead strive to increase the number of those qualified to enter IPTA, he said.

The meritocracy system introduced this year replaced the traditional quota system which reserved 55 per cent of places in IPTA to Bumiputera students.

Dr Mahathir said that if the quota system had been continued, it would mean that many Malay students would not get places in IPTA if the number of those who scored excellent results was more than the places under the 55 per cent quota.

Dr Mahathir said the government always resorted to the "leap frog" approach to speed up the process of achieving any target, as the conventional process took time.

Malaysia had proven that it could succeed by adopting that approach, said the Prime Minister.

For instance, he said, the country was able to produce cars after just a brief period of learning, whereas Western countries took some 100 years to learn to make cars before producing them.

"That's why we must have confidence in ourselves. When we have problems, we can find solutions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was also free to voice its opinions at the international arena because of its policy of not being tied to anyone.

On the assembly, Dr Mahathir noted that there were more delegates and supporters, young and old, present this time although there were no party elections.

He said this could mean that more Malays were beginning to realise the importance of Umno's struggle and their desire to be with the party.

On his apology for failing to bring greater progress to the Malays, Dr Mahathir said it was done sincerely.

"I hope no one will think that I was doing it to gain sympathy," he said.

Commenting on the subjects raised during the debate on the motion of religion and social, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the Hudud law designed by PAS was a proof that the party had deviated from the true teachings of Islam.

-- BERNAMA

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