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Dr M: Fighting spirit weakening

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the fighting spirit of some party members had weakened as they were more interested in self-promotion than in supporting the party.

"The commitment and undivided support for the party is not there (among these members)," he said.

The Prime Minister recalled the success of the first general election in 1955 when the strong spirit of the Malays from Umno who supported the Alliance had enabled it to win 51 out of the 52 seats contested.

"Back then they understood the struggle and gave their undivided support. But now, we find that the fighting spirit is declining.

"There are some who ask what they will get if they support Umno while others ask what they had received after being an Umno member for 15 or 20 years."

He was addressing 1,000-odd foreign Umno Club alumni members during a dinner to launch the alumni's third annual general meeting yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the 283-majority win by Umno candidate at the Pendang by-election was a proof of this. Some party members had sulked because they did not get money or that nasi lemak was not prepared for them.

Dr Mahathir said although more than 80 per cent of the population in Pendang and Anak Bukit were Malays, Umno's candidate in Pendang won only by 283 votes because not all Umno members gave their undivided support.

He said in some incidences during the 1999 general election, where the Umno members did not approve of the candidate named, they made sure the person lost. "If such an attitude continues, Umno will lose (in elections) not because it does not serve the people but because of ill-feelings among members."

Dr Mahathir reminded the alumni not to expect anything in return, but they should be committed to the race, religion and country when serving the party.

"But let's ask ourselves, haven't we got anything? What about the roads, clinics, schools and not to mention scholarships to study locally and abroad?"

Dr Mahathir, who is the patron of the alumni, later received donations from Puncak Niaga Sdn Bhd, IJM Corporation Bhd, Airod Sdn Bhd (RM50,000 each), Glomac Group Bhd and Safura Group (RM20,000 each) on behalf of the alumni.

Pembinaan Punca Cergas Sdn Bhd contributed RM1 million towards organising an annual essay writing competition over the next 20 years.