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Mahathir-PAS

DON'T BELITTLE THOSE PURSUING OTHER DISCIPLINES, PM TELLS PAS

LANGKAWI, April 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that PAS should not belittle those pursuing disciplines other than religious knowledge to contribute towards the well-being of Muslims.

He said that PAS incorrectly interpreted Islam when Muslims in the country were stressed upon to only place emphasis on religious knowledge and reject other disciplines which they claimed were secular even though such disciplines would serve the interest of the religion and the well-being of Muslims themselves.

"Undoubtedly, those acquiring religious knowledge derive immense benefit but those pursuing other disciplines to contribute to the well-being of Muslims should not be belittled

"Muslims can achieve progress if they were to balance the need of this world and the hereafter," he said when opening the Langkawi Umno division here.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that PAS' struggles differed from the struggles of Umno which strives to defend and protect Islam and Muslims by providing them knowledge so that they could improve themselves to defend the religion, the race and the country.

"If we are poor and destitute, we cannot possibly defend Islam. If we are not poor, others cannot exploit our poverty factor to undermine our faith," he said.

The prime minister said that Umno's struggles should continue to be pursued so that its struggles would remain relevant.

He said that after the 1999 general election, there was widespread allegation that Umno was no longer relevant in the Malay community in the country due to the party's rather poor performance in the election because many constituencies like in Kedah for instance, had been captured by the opposition.

However, he said, the outcome of the Ketari, Indera Kayangan and Likas state by-elections showed that Umno and the Barisan Nasional (BN) were increasingly gaining support.

Dr Mahathir said that he was happy now because many young people were joining Umno through the Umno Youth and Puteri Umno and if they continue to believe in Umno's struggles, the party would forever remain relevant.

"We should open the way for the younger generation. We must be prepared to bow out so that they will be able to take over the leadership. The older generation should welcome the younger generation, in fact opening the way for them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that sometimes Umno fail to get new members because the leadership at the branch level fear that their position would be at stake following the entry of qualified young people.

"If this happens, Umno will become irrelevant and will eventually meet its demise together with the older generation. Let's not regard Umno as belonging to us and others have no place in Umno," he said.

He however advised the younger generation not to fight for positions when the older generation eventually resign from their posts.

"Don't regard Umno's struggles as being unsuccessful when we fail to gain something. Actually, everyone enjoys benefits from Umno struggles including educational, health and business facilities," he said.

The prime minister said that the people should be grateful to Umno and

give the party their support at all times.

Asked to comment on the banners put up at various spots on the island resort displaying the words "Terima Kasih Perdana Menteri" (Thank You Prime Minister), Dr Mahathir quipped: "Welcome."

Some 600 banners and bunting were put up to convey appreciation for Dr Mahathir's contributions and efforts to develop Langkawi as an international tourist destination and upgrade the standard of living of residents of the island.

-- BERNAMA

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