

20 JUN 2003

Umno-Debate (State)

BE SERIOUS IN ATTRACTING THE YOUTHS, UMNO TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- The tasks of drawing the younger generation to join Umno must be seriously implemented to ensure continuation of the Malay struggle, said Johor Umno liaison committee chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

He said the party should edge closer to the youths and invite them to join in race-building efforts.

Referring to the 1999 general election which gave some jolts and reverses against Umno, the Johor Menteri Besar said it should be used as a warning signal as in that particular year, many of the Malays had switched their support to the opposition parties.

"We are facing a generation of Malay youths who no longer uphold their race's struggle like what we have known. They are from a generation born from our achievements.

"But we failed to approach them and they became sceptical, cynical and unthankful to the struggle of the preceding generations," Abdul Ghani said when debating the Umno president's policy speech at the 54th Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here today.

He said efforts should be made to attract the rich and medium-class society who frequently forgot the Umno struggle which had greatly contributed to their successes.

Abdul Ghani said Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) must achieve a resounding victory in the next general election to pave the way for a firm and strong mandate, enabling the new leadership to perform its duties and continue the nation's progress.

He said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stewardship of Umno in the past 22 years had brought much glory for the nation apart from boosting dignity of the Malays.

"He (Dr Mahathir) has mapped out the direction for us to proceed with these tough tasks. He has set up a high standard in excellence but which is not impossible for us to follow if we are really committed, confident, hard-working and disciplined," said Abdul Ghani.

Expressing undivided support from Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who would be taking over the Umno leadership, Abdul Ghani said Umno should strive on cementing unity among its members.

Federal Territory Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the Umno leadership had made significant contributions to the nation.

This included achieving the country's independence and improving the people's socio-economic status, he said.

Tengku Adnan said these successes were achieved during a short time and should be recognized and acknowledged by all even though the nation had only achieved independence a mere 46 years ago.

"We should be proud as during a short period of time, our leaders managed to develop the race and nation apart from upholding Islam.

"This same leadership has successfully promote Malaysia worldwide and the voice of our leaders is now being heard by the world community, be it the developing nations or superpowers," he said.

Tengku Adnan said Umno was most fortunate as the party was bestowed with great leaders, beginning with Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and now, Dr Mahathir.

He said Dr Mahathir's visions had strengthened the Umno and nation

leadership and this was proven by Malaysia's rapid and robust development.

Tengku Adnan said the same visions, under the stewardship of Abdullah, would gain more progress for the party and nation.

Pahang Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said Dr Mahathir's 22 years as the Umno president had brought much progress and achievement to the country.

"Only those who are senseless, silly and arrogant are blind to the successes brought by Dr Mahathir," he said.

Adnan also expressed appreciation for the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, as the person who played a crucial role to the success of Dr Mahathir's leadership.

Perak Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali said Dr Mahathir's 22 years as Umno president was not a short time and if a baby was born on the same day which Dr Mahathir became Prime Minister, the infant would have now turned into a matured and sturdy adult.

"(The infant) will no longer cry for milk, beg for affection or ask to be put to sleep. This being will no longer ask for help to walk and neither it needs a walking stick," he said.

Tajol Rosli also recorded his thanks for Dr Siti Hasmah, who he said was willing to sacrifice and share her "love and care" for Dr Mahathir with Umno and the people.

"We wish to convey our deepest and most heartfelt thanks for Dr Siti Hasmah, for giving us another year after Dr Mahathir announced that he was stepping down at the Umno general assembly last year, this is Dr Siti Hasmah's huge sacrifice for the people and nation," he said.

Meanwhile, Umno club member Jumiyyati Ismail said the party's struggle had become clearer and well received by the younger generation including those who were abroad.

She said this was proven by the growth in the number of Umno clubs overseas, which reached 44 in six continents, apart from the encouraging response from students in local public universities.

Jumiyyati however urged the party leadership not to be complacent and watch out for any attempts by negative elements to influence this group.

She urged the government to focus its attention on the younger generation who always needed guidance, support and attention.

Jumiyyati said the Umno clubs would provide their full support for Abdullah when he took over the Umno presidency in October.

The motion was unanimously passed.

-- BERNAMA

NM KHY ROS ZUL