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Politics-Veterans (Reaction)

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE PEOPLE OF CALIBRE, SAYS POLITICIANS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Members of Parliament should be people of calibre as well as popular, regardless of their age to enable them to form a strong leadership in developing the country, said several politicians today.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Dr Mohamed Zahir Ismail said many aspects had to be looked into and it did not mean that once a veteran, he could no longer serve the rakyat.

In addition, popularity also played a part because "even how good someone is, it is no use if he is not popular," said Mohamed Zahir, who was an assemblyman and Member of Parliament in the 1950s and 60s.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice that veterans make way for their juniors in the Barisan Nasional (BN).

The Former High Court Judge, who has been Dewan Rakyat Speaker since June, 1982 however said it would be fine if new faces were given the opportunity in the country's leadership.

Meanwhile in Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said he believed Dr Mahathir did not mean all veterans would have to do so immediately.

He said the veterans would make way for new faces when it was the right time for them to do so.

Dr Koh cited as example Gerakan President Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik who wanted to retire two years ago. He was forced to stay on following request by party members.

He said the party felt that it was not the time yet for Dr Lim to retire because he could still contribute, strong and of the same age as Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who would succeed Dr Mahathir.

"Personally, I also want him (Keng Yaik) to continue to lead the party. Not now or in the near future for him to relinquish his position," he said.

In Sarawak, Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) President Tan Sri Dr George Chan said BN veterans who still commanded support of the people should stay on.

However, he said those who felt that they no longer had the support should step down to make way for juniors to take over.

"In fact by now, veteran politicians should have already prepared or groomed their deputies to over from them," he told reporters after officiating the earth-breaking ceremony for the RM3.3 million Sarawak Society for the Blind (SSB) centre at Ong Tiang Swee Road today.

Meanwhile in Kuala Lumpur, Parti Pesaka Bumiputra Bersatu Sarawak (PBB) Vice-President Tan Sri Dr Sulaiman Daud said it was a fair advice to all veterans.

Dr Sulaiman, who had been a Member of Parliament since 1973, said that in the BN had many new faces who has the potential of become good elected representatives.

"Being an elected representative is not easy...we have a heavy responsibility, which is entrusted to us by the people," said the Member of Parliament for Petra Jaya.

People's Progress Party (PPP) President (PPP) Datuk M Kayveas meanwhile said the political arena in Malaysia required a change with new faces in the leadership.

The Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department said the veterans should give opportunity to their juniors because the juniors were "shy" to challenge them out of respect.

-- BERNAMA

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