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Mahathir-Threats

UMNO LOSES EVERYTHING IF PERSONAL STRUGGLE PREVAILS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned that Umno will be defeated and stands to lose everything in the next general election if its leaders and members give priority to their own self interests and even prepared to betray the struggle of the party.

The Umno president said that the brilliant history of Umno would fade and the backbone of the Barisan Nasional (BN) would follow the fate of those nationalist parties in other countries which no longer exist or which have lost power.

Because of that, he said, Umno members must stop their struggle for posts and instead be ready to make sacrifices to ensure the success of Umno and the BN.

Dr Mahathir expressed concern over this attitude in the party even though not widespread, saying that the threat which still remains was the willingness of some leaders and members to sabotage the party because of their disappointment when not chosen to contest.

"If more people adopt this attitude, the party will lose not because the opposition is strong but indirectly Umno members collude with the opposition party," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who will step down as Umno president and prime minister in October, said this in his last policy speech at the 54th Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here today. It was televised live by RTM.

In his speech which deals with future threats faced by Umno and the nation, he spoke at length on the various challenges from outside the country, within the country and within the party.

Dr Mahathir, who has led Umno to victory in five general elections, said that Umno must ensure its success in the general election and because of this, the party plays a very important role.

"Umno is not just any party. Umno is the ruling party.... If not for Umno and its struggle, our country will not be independent in 1957 and will not be stable and successful as it is now.

"This is admitted by everyone; by the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians and the other ethnic groups in Malaysia and also by foreigners," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir said, Umno members and leaders at all levels have a heavy responsibility which could only be shouldered and be implemented successfully if they equip themselves with the required values, knowledge and skills.

In facing challenges from outside the country, within the country and within the party, Dr Mahathir said that the Malays, especially Umno members, must uphold the true teachings of Islam which are all positive and constructive like the exhortation to be brothers in Islam, including in the party, outside the party, outside the country, to keep their promises and undertakings, to work hard, to acquire all kinds of skills which could help upgrade their resilience and many more.

"There is no influence greater than Islam in building the strength and resilience of the Malays," he said in his speech packed with advice and guidance to ensure Umno's continued success.

The Umno president of over two decades said that the only ones who could determine the fate of the party were Umno members themselves.

"We can handle our foreign and domestic problems with a strong government. But the problem within the party, within Umno cannot be

resolved by the government. The only ones who can is the party and the members themselves."

He said that having been successful for so long many of the leaders and members were without the true spirit anymore, and instead they give priority to their own self interests.

"The struggle for posts in the party has become so critical that the party's interests, the interest of our race and the nation's interest have been pushed aside. Umno and the Malays have become weak because of this attitude," he said.

He said that the contest within the party was in order to get the best candidate and the best leaders, not in order to quarrel and to sulk and to seek revenge which could cause a loss to the party and the national struggle.

Those who understood democracy would close ranks behind the successful candidate after the contest was over and together ensure the success of the struggle, he said.

"In truth the success of the group will bring success and benefits to every individual member of the group. On the other hand, the success of the individual does not guarantee the success of the group," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno would lose in the election not because the opposition was strong but because of the attitude of Umno members.

"Actually the opposition is not strong. They cannot defeat Umno. But Umno can defeat Umno. I need not elaborate. We all know. The opposition did not win. Only Umno had lost," he said.

"If Umno is strong, then the Barisan Nasional will be strong, the Malaysian government will be strong and Malaysia will be strong. A weak Umno will bring disaster to all of us."

He also warned that if Umno do not know how to handle these challenges, do not have the right spirit and the political will, the brilliant history of Umno would fade and Umno would follow the fate of those nationalist parties in other countries which no longer exist or which have lost power.

He was grateful that Umno had been successful in facing various challenges and threats including the effects of the formation of a splinter party which now no longer affected Umno as it did during the 1999 general election.

"But the threat which remains is the willingness of some leaders and members to sabotage the party," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that at present this attitude was not widespread but it pointed in a dangerous direction.

He explained that for the general election, like it or not, candidates have to be chosen.

When a candidate has been chosen, he said, the one not chosen may try to ensure that this candidate would lose.

They forget that when the candidate loses, the party loses, he said.

"But such is their attitude that they are willing to see the party lose and the opposition wins rather than see their colleague in the party wins," he said.

The prime minister said that in truth this was betrayal against the struggle of the party, the religion, race and the nation.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the need for the party to be prepared to accept new members to carry on with its struggle.

He was grateful because the founding of Puteri Umno, the party's third wing, had been accepted and the cooperation between Puteri and Wanita was strong.

However, he said, at branch and divisional levels there was some unwillingness to accept new members especially those who were qualified because of the fear of losing their posts.

"This attitude must be got rid of. If not the party will die together with the present old members and leaders," he said.

Dr Mahathir also took the opportunity to place on record his appreciation for the support of Umno, the Malays and other Bumiputeras and the people of Malaysia throughout the time he was at the helm of the government and the BN.

He said that he truly wish to repay the party which had given him opportunities to realise his ideas on restoring the honour of the race and people, to help to progress them and his country.

The prime minister said that the people and history would judge and determine whether his service was good or bad.

Dr Mahathir also sought pardon for the mistakes and wrongs he had committed during the length of his leadership of the party.

-- BERNAMA

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