

11 MAY 2003

Mahathir-Unity

UMNO MEMBERS MUST ENSURE UNITY BECOMES THE PARTY'S PILLAR OF STRENGTH

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said every Umno member must ensure that unity becomes the party's pillar of strength in facing all challenges.

The Prime Minister said every party member must avoid a split, which had emerged in Umno and created splinter groups out to disrupt party unity.

"We are still united but the elements of disunity are already visible.

"In the past, we were divided too but we had closed ranks. Now, we are united but there are still small splinter groups which are harming us," he said at a news conference after launching the 57th Umno anniversary celebrations at the Merdeka Stadium, here tonight.

Asked to elaborate on the splinter groups which he referred to, Dr Mahathir said they were Umno members who were disappointed and angry because they did not get a place in the party.

The Umno President said that even though such splinter groups were getting lesser, there were attempts to disrupt unity and to pull out their members from Umno, the backbone to ruling party in the country.

"This is all self-interest, if they are fighting for the interest of their race, religion and country they will not form splinter groups," he said.

On Umno members' preparedness to face major challenges and the danger of new colonialism, he said every Umno member and in particular every Malay should discard negative attitude and personal gains to be able to face these challenges.

Dr Mahathir said at the moment the Malays still cared more of their personal interest than that of their race, religion and country.

"We are still very relax. We don't think that we are in any danger. We think we can have fun and games. We don't work hard. We don't study. We are not discipline and we are divided.

"We are more interested in personnal things rather than national things, for example to become Umno division's chief, Supreme Council member and one of the candidates (for election)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that what was important was to continue with the party struggle because it was not over yet as "we are facing a great danger now".

Some 40,000 Umno members and supporters seemed oblivious of a steady drizzle which fell while Dr Mahathir was delivering his speech, which lasted for almost one and half hours.

The celebrations, held in true spirit of nationalism, began with the arrival of Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, to the shouts of "Hidup Umno", "Hidup Melayu" and "Hidup parti Kita".

Also present were Gerakan President Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) President Datuk Amar Leo Moggie and People's Progressive Party (PPP) President Datuk M. Kayveas.

-- BERNAMA

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