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Dompok-Mahathir

UPKO PAYS "MY WAY" TRIBUTE TO DR M

PENAMPANG (Sabah), Aug 8 (Bernama) -- With the impending retirement of the longest-serving Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) has its own way to convey a parting tribute by acknowledging Dr Mahathir's way in propelling the nation to what it is today.

UPKO President Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said Dr Mahathir had accorded Malaysia the dignity and moral courage to tell the world: "We shall not be dictated, we shall do it our way."

Dompok, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said he pondered long when preparing his speech so that he could aptly sum up his party's appreciation to the way Dr Mahathir managed the nation for the last 22 years.

"I remember that one of your (Dr Mahathir) favourite song is "My Way". I believe that your choice of favourite song has a message for all Malaysians.

"And to my mind, that message is - we can have and do have the capacity to do it our way -- the Malaysian Way," he said to the thunderous applause of the crowd when delivering his keynote address at the party's 9th Annual Congress at the Sabah Cultural Centre Hall here today.

Dompok said it was no exaggeration to say that Malaysia had grown by leaps and bounds, and today the country was justifiably the most developed among developing countries.

"Malaysia is now one of the wealthiest nations in Southeast Asia and has long been one of the most stable countries in Asia," he said.

He said: "All along, we did our way and with you (Dr Mahathir) leading all the way".

In underlining Dr Mahathir's achievements in the Malaysia way, Dompok said Dr Mahathir first introduced the Punch Card to record work times, encouraging Malaysian workers to be punctual for work.

"And along with the sense of belonging and identity, YAB the Prime Minister pushed for the implementation of the civil service code of ethics and introduced the clean, efficient and trustworthy campaign," he said.

The introduction of the "Look East Policy" also highlighted the need to learn from the positive work values and the emphasis on group benefits versus individualism as could be seen in the success of the East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, he said.

Dompok said Dr Mahathir also recognised the need to build up national pride and confidence through the "Malaysia Boleh" campaign.

In this respect, he said, the introduction, implementation and more importantly, the involvement of local talents in various national undertakings such as Proton, Menara KL, Petronas Twin Towers, KL International Airport, Putrajaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor are undoubtedly testimonies to the growing capacity of Malaysians to undertake huge and difficult projects.

"The country and the world will long remember your courage and fortitude in imposing capital controls and pegging the ringgit to the US dollar in response to the 1997 financial crisis, in contravention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prescriptions.

"In the words of the YAB, "That was tough. To go against the rest of the world, conventional wisdom, to make a decision that may break the whole country is a tough decision," he said.

However, Dompok said the Prime Minister's decision had since been proven to be the right choice for Malaysia and the IMF itself had to admit that the steps "you took in the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis have proven to be highly effective.

He said: "In this instance, history has already proven you right."

On politics, Dompok said the key pillar of the country's continuing political stability was clearly the vital calming influence of the multi-ethnic and multi-party BN formula.

"Some of us will recall the apprehension among the non-Malay communities when the Prime Minister took over as the Prime Minister in the 1981 given the widely-held perception then that he was an ultra Malay largely because of the publication of the Prime Minister's book "The Malay Dilemma," he said.

Today this perception had vanished as Malaysians now realised that he was merely articulating on an issue that required national attention, which left unchecked, would evolve into a bigger problem for the entire nation, he said.

Dompok said the BN Government had done a lot to help the Kadazandusun and Murut communities in Sabah.

This included the introduction of the Kadazandusun language in the schools, Universiti Malaysia Sabah setting up a Kadazandusun Chair, official support for the Kadazandusun Language Foundation, government recognition of the Kadazandusun Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the setting up of the Sabah Natives' Affairs Council.

-- BERNAMA

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