

Bangsamoro seeks inspiration from Umno
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Bangsamoro people in the southern Philippines can draw valuable lessons from the story behind the formation of Umno.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chairman Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim yesterday said the two organisations shared similarities in their struggles.

Speaking at the 3rd Umno International Forum at the Putra World Trade Centre, Murad said the transition of Umno as a united independence movement into a governing political party was exemplary.

Murad said Malaysians had every reason to be grateful for the country's governance, which was less divisive than the one experienced in Philippine politics.

"Your electoral franchise has preceded that of the Arab Spring. Your experience in governance is of lesser partisan divisive tendencies than we had experienced," he pointed out.

Murad also expressed his gratitude for Malaysia's role in mediating a peace deal between MILF and the Philippine government last month, bringing an end to four decades of conflict in the southern Philippines. "Having signed the Framework of Agreement on the Bangsamoro, the MILF has energised diplomacy, thanks to the facilitation of the Malaysian government.

"It is not surprising that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who has the same sense of national purpose for moderation and transformation, witnessed the signing in person."

Murad is one of several guest speakers during the two-day forum, which is held in conjunction with the 66th Umno General Assembly.

Representatives from 23 political parties around the world are attending the forum, themed "Conflict and conciliation in the people's politics -- looking back or looking forward?"

Kenyan delegate Victor Swanya Ogeto stressed that it was important for any government to display decisive leadership to pull together a nation.

"I believe that in times of serious conflict, where our differences appear impossible, leadership matters."

Ogeto, who is a Kenyan member of parliament from the Wiper Democratic Party, noted that his party shared similar challenges to the ones faced by Umno in the past.

"Our party, like Umno, has faced severe opposition; our policies and visions had been challenged, but it took leadership to remain committed in the midst of conflict and dissent," he said.

Ogeto also reminded Umno leaders that while accommodating dissenting views was commendable, it was imperative to be resolute in doing what was best for the nation.

"Leaders must rise to build a strong foundation of cooperation. We must learn to understand our differences, but we must not bow to them.

"We can apply strategies like Malaysia's Vision 2020 and Kenya's Vision 2030 to eradicate poverty and corruption, but our work stands on a weak foundation if our differences are not resolved."

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