

Dr M slammed for Umno demise remarks
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Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's prediction that Umno will soon die has raised the ire of Umno members, with many rejecting his remarks made in the Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia newspaper.

They said the country's longest-serving prime minister, who retired in 2003, should be aware the Malay party is undergoing transformation and renewal.

Umno supreme council member Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi (pic) was more harsh in his reaction, pointing out that the malaise afflicting Umno had been present since Dr Mahathir's tenure as president from 1981 to 2003.

"Umno has been in existence for a long time and it is afflicted by a few sicknesses which have been around since he helmed the party. He did not cure it while he was there," Dr Mohd Puad told The Malaysian Insider.

Among the "sicknesses" that were stated in article were disunity, not placing importance on the party's struggles, and money politics.

Dr Mohd Puad said it is "unacceptable" and "not right" to say the party will die as the present leadership is working hard to cure the party of its sickness.

"As long as Umno does not run from its struggles and upholds its principles of moderation, inclusiveness and justice for all races, it will survive," he said.

In his commentary published in Utusan Malaysia yesterday, Dr Mahathir described the party as "ailing" and said it "will soon die".

He admonished the party for its poor leadership and lack of young blood, saying that "once robust party leaders were now aged and out of touch with the times".

He said they should realise the importance of not staying on past their time. Eventually people get bored of these outdated leaders who refuse to accept reality.

"Umno is suffering from old age and will soon meet its demise. This is human nature. Sooner or later, humans will meet their death," he wrote, insisting he was acting for the benefit of the party.

Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin, who also sits on the supreme council, said the presence of young leaders such as Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir and Khairy Jamaluddin is proof that it has plenty of young blood.

"Young leaders are usually in the Youth and Puteri wings and when they reach the age of 40, they can be part of the supreme council to pave their way to take over the party's leadership.

"Dr Mahathir might be mistaken. I respect him and he is my idol. He might have overlooked the renewal process that is currently going on in the party," he said.

Another supreme council member, Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, felt Dr Mahathir's harsh comments were aimed at urging the party to be more open and dynamic.

He said while Dr Mahathir is very experienced, he should be aware that Umno is undergoing a transformation.

"I respect his views. To me, Umno's willingness to change is evident from the new electoral system where the fate of its leaders is in the hands of some 250,000 members at the party's elections next month," he said. - September 17, 2013.

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