

Zahid: UMNO to remain relevant for all Malaysians
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He says despite being faced with various challenges, the party has remained strong and continues to carry out its duties and responsibilities to fulfil the agenda as enshrined in the constitution.

KUALA LUMPUR: UMNO, which is celebrating its 71st anniversary tomorrow, will remain relevant for all Malaysians because the party's struggle is not only confined to the Malays, said Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Zahid, who is UMNO vice-president performing the duties of the party's deputy president, said despite being faced with various challenges, the party remained strong and continued to carry out its duties and responsibilities to fulfil the agenda as enshrined in the constitution, including for the Malay rulers and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak.

"In the past seven decades, we have been following the history of UMNO's struggle, which is full of various challenges. Even UMNO founder Onn Jaafar wanted to open UMNO to the non-Malays and it ended with him forming another party, but Alhamdulillah (Praise to God), Tunku Abdul Rahman (the country's first prime minister) succeeded in giving a new soul to UMNO, although the founder was no longer with the party.

"Leaders come and go and so do various obstacles and challenges. In fact, the party is challenged from within and outside, stabbed from inside and out. The stabbing has yet to subside until now, even though UMNO's deeds to that someone is huge.

"UMNO remains a party which is strong and will remain relevant for all quarters," he told Bernama in an interview in conjunction with UMNO's 71st anniversary in BNC's "Ruang Bicara Khas" programme, which was aired tonight.

Zahid said now at 71 years, UMNO had reached the best age of maturity as an organisation.

Nevertheless, he said, UMNO still needed inputs to apply its maturity in its action.

"In this matter, continuity in leadership since UMNO's inception should inject elements of maturity in the survival of the party's struggle.

“In fact, the UMNO’s administration and support from the grassroots for the party’s ideas are going on well. This is the special feature of UMNO where the process of continuity prevails and we feel that the people are still dependent on the party because Umno can champion for them not only now, but also in the future,” he added.

In line with the continuing maturity in the party’s struggle, Zahid said he was prepared to shoulder the challenge together with Prime Minister and UMNO president Najib Razak.

Zahid called on UMNO leaders and members to stay away from the culture of “bat politics”, which is “seasonal politics” and “satay politics”.

“We don’t practise seasonal politics. This means UMNO is not seasonal like bats which don’t appear when it is not the fruit season,” he said, adding that UMNO always went to the ground to serve the people.

He said “satay politics” should also be avoided because it showed a bad habit of pricking or instigating others to be at loggerheads.

“The nastiest are the people who fan the satay, including those who heat and prick the satay. In this situation, I think ‘bat politics’ and ‘satay politics’ should be avoided as UMNO is getting more matured,” he said.

Zahid said UMNO had also beefed up its information machinery in various mediums, especially social media, with various approaches and for various categories of people.

Efforts should be intensified so that only credible information gets to be disseminated to the people, especially voters in the coming general election, he added.

He reminded the party machinery to plan their strategy early to ward off attacks by enemies, especially during the general election, to avoid incidents like Barisan Nasional (BN) being accused of bringing in phantom voters as had happened before.

If these attack by the enemies cannot be tackled promptly, the accusations could influence voters and the situation can adversely affect BN’s chances of winning, he added.

Zahid expressed confidence that all quarters in the party could work as a team to ensure a win for BN in the coming general election.

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