

Work together for progress—Mahathir

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FRONT MEMBERS ARE TOLD: THINK OF THE NATION'S DEVELOPMENT

KUCHING, Sat. — Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad reminded members of the National Front today of the importance of practising politics of national development rather than interparty politicking.

This way, they would be able to do more for the people, he said. The people would suffer if the parties wasted time fighting each other.

They must think of the development of the country and work together for progress, he added.

Dr. Mahathir was opening the general assembly of Partai Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) at the Dewan Pemandangan Tun Abdul Razak here. He said there must be understanding among the National Front members on broad and general terms.

If attention was paid to smaller details, no understanding could be

achieved, he added.

For example, he said, if too much attention was paid to any one concept of development, there was bound to be some dissatisfaction. There must be solidarity and compromise within the Front.

Benefits

Dr. Mahathir added the National Front had proved that parties which opposed each other could come together for the good of the nation and people.

The last general election proved that the people accepted this concept. It was this concept which has brought greater benefit for the people.

The Front, he added,

also proved that the leaders were not greedy for power and they were willing to work together with opposition parties for a stronger and more effective Government.

The National Front concept as practised in Malaysia was unique to this country. In other countries which practised democracy and where there were many political parties, Governments had fallen because they could not get the support of the other parties, he said.

Dr. Mahathir said there were many divisive factors in the country. These included the multi-racial and multi-religious composition of the population, the federal

system of Government which gave certain amounts of autonomy to the States and the differences among the States themselves.

However, these factors had not been allowed to come in the way of achieving solidarity, co-operation and goodwill. Dr. Mahathir added that in this respect, Malaysia had achieved extraordinary success, compared with other countries which had achieved independence.

Compromise

Differences could be overcome through compromise and the knowledge that all parties were from the same family. There was no problem or issue which could not be solved without consultation.

PBB acting President, Datuk Amar Haji Taib bin Mahmud, told party members to see how they could help the Government achieve the objectives of the New Economic Policy.

They should look into ways of mobilising the people to make a success of development projects. The people had a big role to play in the NEP. They must act now, he added.

More than 1,500 delegates and observers attended the two-day general assembly of the PBB. Representatives of component parties of the National Front were also at the opening.

Among them were Mr. Paul Leong who represented the Gerakan, PAS President, Datuk Haji Mohamed Asri, Mr. Richard Ho who represented the MCA, the secretary-general of the MIC, Mr. S. Subramaniam, and PFP Vice-President, Mr. S. I. Rajah.

Representatives of Berjaya and Usno were also present.

Dr. Mahathir was greeted on arrival here this morning by the Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Rahman Yakub and other State VIPs.

At the airport, Dr. Mahathir told reporters that the National Front concept will work as long as the general direction and aim of the component parties were the same.



DR. MAHATHIR

"The details can be worked out eventually," he added. If the component parties were to worry about the details it would lead to difficult problems, he said.

Dr. Mahathir said there were some people who were going into the details and finding areas of disagreement.

He stressed that a general approach should be adopted in solving national problems. The details could be worked out by the leaders.

Whatever decision was made by the leaders must be accepted by the party members, he said.

Dr. Mahathir said that so far there has been acceptance in the National Front on the concept of joint leadership.

He also commented on a proposal by Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman to have a merger of the three members of the ruling National Front in Sarawak — PBB, SNAP and SUPP.

Changes

Dr. Mahathir said: "Anything that brings us together is good for us. People will see that there is good in working closer together."

On the meeting with Umno Youth in Kuala Lumpur, he said: "Whenever the government does something that brings about substantial changes, the members of the party must be informed so that there is no misunderstanding or misinterpretation."

He added that leaders should also meet "second rung" leaders. It was this system of dialogue which was unique to this country and a feature of Malaysian democracy.

In the afternoon, Dr. Mahathir attended a close-door meeting of representatives of mission schools in Sarawak before returning to Kuala Lumpur.