

THE TASKS AHEAD: MAHATHIR

SEP 1, 1982

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — **Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad** today spelt out the three main tasks that should be pioneered by Umno from now to ensure a better life for the Malays.

They are:

- To change the attitude of the Malays so that they would be in line with the needs of Islam in modern times;

- To enhance Islamic practices; and

- To ensure that the Malay community really practised Islamic teachings.

The Prime Minister and Umno president, who was delivering his presidential address at the opening of the 33rd Umno General Assembly here, described these three tasks as the biggest struggle faced by Umno since its formation 36 years ago.

He stressed that they should be realised to achieve the objective of making Malaysia a highly

respected country.

His 90-minute policy speech, which was broadcast live over radio, was interrupted 34 times by applause from the delegates.

Also present at the opening were leaders and representatives of Barisan Nasional component parties, including MCA president Datuk Lee San Choon and MIC president Datuk S. Samy Vellu, and former Umno president and Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir touched on various national and party policy issues and also explained the rationale behind the various changes he made since he became the Prime Minister.

Among the matters he touched on were the general election, the challenges which Umno would face, politics and the economy, the Freemason movement, the "Look East" policy, the "kafir-mengkafir" issue and the foreign policy.

He also reminded the winners and losers of yesterday's contests for posts in Umno Youth and

Wanita Umno that while winning and losing are individual perceptions, from the party's point of view there are no losers.

"Those who lost also won because our struggle is to strengthen Umno so that Umno can play its role as the party that protects and shoulders the interests of race, religion and country.

"We should never forget that the aim of contests and the democratic tradition is to strengthen the party and are not contests to find champions," he said.

Touching on politics and economy, he stressed that while politics still play the major role in deciding the fate and direction to be taken by the nation, the economic role has become just as important.

"It is clear that economic activities have become a power in deciding the future of the nation and the future of the bumiputras, especially the Malays.

"The Government's economic agencies cannot be allowed to be filled by just anyone," he said.

He added that when economic agencies were set up to fulfil the needs of the New Economic Policy, politicians were appointed as chairmen with administrators as the managers.

"Usually, neither was experienced or trained in management. While several of those appointed acquired business management skills successfully and quickly, there were many others who failed," he said and added that this failure affected the implementation of the New Economic Policy.

He also said that often, the agencies set up became obstacles to the expansion of bumiputra companies.

He reminded politicians who wanted to join the Government that not all of them are needed in the administration and that some would be needed in the economic field.

"We cannot allow the participation of politicians in government-owned economic bodies as a job for the boys. Don't think that

because of long political service, you should be given posts," he said.

He urged those who are not picked to contest in general elections to prepare and train themselves for involvement in the economic field instead of just hoping to be appointed senators.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also stressed that at the same time, professional managers who came from non-political areas should have increased knowledge of politics.

He warned irresponsible elements who had abused the Government's liberal stance that if the irresponsible acts continue, the Government might review its liberal attitude.

"We hoped that the liberal policy will be valued and nurtured by those who benefit from it. But there are some who assume that this freedom is a 'licence' to do what they like."

He pointed out that there are those who use threats from outside the country to (get the Government) to

tree criminals who have been sentenced after due process of the law.

"They are the puppets of foreign groups who are uneasy at the peace in Malaysia," he said to loud applause.

The Prime Minister said that while the Government had approved the setting up of several newspapers, there were some new newspapers which used sex and scandals to boost sales.

He said that on the surface, these newspapers appeared to take a serious view of the scandals.

"But in fact, what is given top priority is the sale of the newspaper concerned. Wild accusations are made without considering the effect on those accused.

"These newspapers are taking advantage of the reluctance of those accused wanting publicity," he said.

"The Government takes a serious view of the abuse of the Government's liberal policy. We are liberal because we believe the Malaysian society has already matured but if there is no appreciation of the Government's policy, the Government will be

forced to end its liberalism which is being abused," he said.

The Prime Minister warned that the Government's liberalism should not be misconstrued as a sign of weakness.

In this context, he said that there is no plan to abolish the Internal Security Act so long as the activities that threaten the peace of the country continued to be desired by some groups.

On the Freemason movement, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said a person who claimed to be an Umno member had accused that Freemasons had infiltrated the Prime Minister's Department, that the Prime Minister's political secretary was a Freemason and that he himself is a Freemason supporter.

He did not name the person but said that this person was a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

Giving the background of the person, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the person had made use of the bumiputra or Malay status to work against the interests of Malays.

"He has a list purportedly of members of the Freemason movement and uses this so-called list as a

weapon to be waved each time someone else gets something," he said.

There was an audible gasp in the hall when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Umno executive secretary had joined the Freemason movement at one time, like many other Malays.

The party president said the executive secretary and the other Malays joined because of the force of circumstances.

"However, the executive secretary and many of the other Malays have left the movement. They are no longer bound to their so-called Freemason oath because the oaths are not valid for Muslims.

They have repented their action," he said and added that he and other party leaders were satisfied with the executive secretary's loyalty to the party.