

AFFLUENCE TO BLAME FOR MONEY POLITICS

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad blamed the emergence of money politics in the party on the growing affluence of the Malays.

Criticising members who indulged in this unhealthy practice to secure positions in the party, the Prime Minister and Umno president said that it was sad that he had to expose the matter in public.

Unfortunately, Umno's growing membership had resulted in the entry of more and more people without principle who used unethical means for their own self-interests.

He said this had resulted in even some older members who feared losing their positions to resort to similar methods.

Although Umno's membership had increased to more than one million, which he said was a reflection of the Malays' interest in the party, it did not necessarily mean they had understood the spirit of the party's struggle.

"The success of Malays in the economic field does not necessarily mean a blessing. Many who have become rich are not satisfied with the wealth they have acquired," he said.

"They also want political power and will not hesitate to use their money to buy votes to secure a position in the party whether at branch or divisional levels," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited cases where Umno members were feted and sent on vacation overseas.

He added that money politics began when these people sponsor the delegates' stay at expensive hotels during Umno's general assemblies.

If in the past, Umno delegates had to find their own accommodation, today they were given preferential treatment by people aspiring for posts in the Umno Supreme Council, he said.

Dr Mahathir blamed both the givers and the takers.

"The takers are also wrong. Often they blackmail the prospective candidate subtly into giving them such treatment at the threat of withdrawing their support," he said.

He said he did not like to make public the existence of such trends in Umno as opposition parties would exploit the issue.

"But I have no choice as an increasing number of members have forgotten the principles of the party's struggle," he said.

It was for this reason that Umno had to amend its constitution to effectively curb such trends, he said.

The amendments were aimed, among other things, to prevent members from bringing party matters to the courts, he said.

However, he said changes to the constitution would be meaningless if members themselves did not observe party regulations and rules.

Dr Mahathir said that he was aware that some people would exploit the concept of "contract" between members and the party which they believe was not necessary.

Many would demand that the party leadership be "fair and just."

Dr Mahathir said that generally those who had failed to obtain favours from the leadership were the ones who questioned this.

Stressing that since Umno practises democracy, leaders who were considered as being unfair could be ousted through the process of party election.

However, members must not allow "technical faults" to over-ride the interest of the party, he said.

A split in Umno, he said, would destroy the party and the future of the Malays and Islam would be uncertain.

Reminding them that those "who are greedy will be the ultimate losers" he said that it was court intrigues which had led to the downfall of the Malacca Sultanate and the country to be dominated by the colonialists.

The greatest challenge facing Umno today was whether the Malays would be able to administer a party which had grown into a large organisation.

"This is the greatest test we face now that Umno is a big organisation whose members include all groups of Malays including those who failed to understand the party's objectives and who lack the spirit of nationalism," he said.