

Dr M: Royal prestige must be preserved

MS7 20 SEP 1985

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has warned business interests against soliciting the backing of Rulers to gain an unfair advantage at the expense of public confidence in the system of constitutional monarchy.

The Umno president, in the opening speech at his party's 36th annual general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said that a party of businessmen had cynically persuaded royalty to take part in enterprises in the hope of sheltering under the constitutional guarantees of the monarchy and using the Rulers' leverage to grease their dealings with the authorities.

"Like it or not, this sort of thing mars the good name of the Rulers among the people. Like it or not, should this go on, the prestige of the Rulers will turn sour.

"Like it or not, the people will eventually question the system of constitutional monarchy," he said.

"Anyone attempting such an endeavour will be blacklisted and his entire commercial dealings with the Government leered at and ignored.

"He will be exposed to the public

glare for bringing the system of constitutional monarchy into disrepute."

Dr Mahathir said that elaborate business plans were set out to tempt the Rulers to get involved. "The Government has tried its best to conceal these enterprises for the good of the Rulers."

Special consideration

"These people with vested interests are of the opinion that with the involvement of the Rulers in their activities they too will be sheltered by the law, and can afford to forego the policy and objectives of a Government of the people."

He said such enterprises that carry the influence of a Ruler have come increasingly into public view to endanger the people's loyalty to the Rulers as symbols of sovereignty untainted by politics.

Dr Mahathir also warned against pervasive "money politics" in Umno. That form of corruption was no longer limited to simple vote-buying, he said.

"The receivers are also wrong. They solicit, subtly coercing the hopeful candidate for that special consideration.

"If refused, that candidate could come to grief," he said.

The party president justified the proposed amendments to the Umno constitution as urgently required "restraints against the abuses of members and party leaders".

"These laws will give Umno's regulatory boards the power to settle problems without the likelihood of court injunctions, lately in vogue among members who place their own interests above the party's."

Responding to criticisms that the proposal would institute rigid tribunals instead of increasing fair play, Dr Mahathir maintained that the essential democratic nature of Umno would remain the over-riding decider.

"What is important is that when that leader has been found to be unfair, he can be replaced through the democratic process. Let us not allow technical nits to get on top of the principles and interests of the party as a whole."