

Don't be fooled by the selfish: PM

'We must not lose sight of tradition'

MS 21 MAR 1987

KEMAMAN, Fri. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today told party members not to be hoodwinked by allegations made by self-seeking people whose only concern was to realise their selfish interests.

He said Umno is a democratic party and believes in the voice of the majority. But party unity and stability should not be jeopardised in the name of democracy.

"Democracy is a Western concept. Although the party subscribes to democracy, its members should not lose sight of Malay traditions and customs," he said when he opened the Kemaman Umno dele-

gates' conference at the Town Hall.

"It is the Malay customs and traditions which have helped to preserve harmony in the party. We should not give up these values in the name of democracy and at the expense of party solidarity and peace."

Dr Mahathir said certain quarters blamed the Government for the country's economic woes. But the downturn in the economy was caused by the decline in the prices of the country's primary commodities following the global recession and drop in demand.

However, the economic scenario is getting brighter

with the prices of commodities such as tin, rubber, palm oil and petrol going up.

The price of palm oil, for instance, had gone up to \$750 a ton compared with just \$400 last year.

Reputation

Dr Mahathir said the resounding victory in the 1986 general election was achieved because of unity in Umno. This unity should be maintained for the benefit of not only Umno but the nation as a whole.

"Umno is the backbone of the country. Even the non-Malays depend on the strength and unity of Umno as it is a

tolerant and moderate party. Divisions in the party will only weaken Umno and spell disaster for the Malay race, religion and nation," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government today was more liberal than it was in the past and people could say or publish almost anything and get away with it.

"When I wrote about the backward position and plight of the Malays in my book *The Malay Dilemma*, it was banned," he said.

"Today so many slanderous books have been written about me, damaging my reputation. But I don't prohibit them.

"Those who wrote these libellous and malicious books were motivated by selfish aims and personal gains."

Dr Mahathir said politics was being tarnished because some people were playing dirty and employed all sorts of underhand tactics to achieve their goals.

"There is nothing wrong with politics as long as those involved in it were sincere, truthful and always have the general good of the people and the nation at heart."

For instance, there were those who criticised the Government for embarking on "prestige" projects. But the same people had supported the projects when these were implemented.

"The Penang Bridge was mooted in 1969 during the time of the late Tun Abdul Razak. But then it was considered a luxury as the Government did not have the money to build it. However, when the Government had the money it went ahead with the project," he added.