

# BN parties must be moderate, says Dr M

STAR 12 JUL 1987

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — There is nothing wrong with the various Barisan Nasional component parties championing the interests and cause of their respective communities, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

But the Prime Minister stressed that in fighting to improve the socio-economic and political positions of their communities, the parties must be moderate and rational in their actions.

"We must always be cautious in making any demands if we want to avoid being branded extremists because it is this that determines the wisdom and maturity of a leader," he said when opening the 34th MCA general assembly at Wisma MCA here.

Leaders of Barisan component parties including MIC president Datuk S. Samy Vellu, Sarawak United People's Party president Datuk Amar Stephen Yong and Parti Bersatu Sabah vice-president Kasitah Gaddam were present at the ceremony.

Also present was former MCA president Tun Tan Siew Sin.

Dr Mahathir also said the Barisan was successful in governing the nation because it was made up of parties that were moderate in their stand.

Other parties, he said, would probably not succeed in ruling a multiracial

country like Malaysia because they were more interested in conflicts rather than consensus.

He said they were extreme and shouted aloud their demands as though this was democracy.

The result: "Democracy wins but they lost and the community suffers."

"We prefer to solve problems through consultation rather than confrontation," he said, to thunderous applause from the floor.

He said the Barisan was always guided by the principles of co-operation, consensus, tolerance and the spirit of give-and-take in its efforts to reach agreement on all matters.

However, he said, the Barisan's success was not without sacrifices.

"Each of us has to make some form of sacrifice for the interest of all," he said.

This was because they did not like to "win the battle but lose the war," he added.

Quoting the English proverb — *Half a loaf is better than no bread* — Dr Mahathir said: "Each of us is willing to pursue moderation in order that we may at least get half a loaf while sacrificing the other half."

"We should remember that other parties must also protect their credibility and need to have the other half."

"This is the Barisan philosophy that has brought success since Merdeka."

But he said of late the

principles of tolerance, co-operation and compromise appeared to have come under siege because certain quarters had put aside the principle of consensus.

There were quarters among the component parties which frequently and vehemently spoke out on certain issues without considering the nature of the matter raised and the repercussions of their hasty action, he said.

"I feel that if there is any dissatisfaction on any matter, they should use the channels available within the coalition to seek a solution," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said that recently, there had been news reports of differing opinions among Barisan component parties, giving the impression that they were no longer in agreement.

"However what has not been given attention is the success of the Barisan in overcoming the problem in the end."

"Therefore, the assumption of other people that the Barisan has become weak is just a dream," he said.

The Prime Minister also advised the leaders to refrain from doing or saying anything that could jeopardise the recovery of the economy.

He also said MPs and State Assemblymen who crossed over to another par-

ty for financial gain would be prosecuted.

He said it was "all right no matter how unethical it is" if the switching of parties was because of differences in political beliefs or ideology.

"But what is becoming clearer is that the switch is because the elected representative is promised money or other things."

"This type of action is no different from accepting bribes," he said.

He said corruption in whatever form could not be taken lightly by society or the Government.

An elected representative suspected of having defected because of material gain would be investigated, Dr Mahathir said.

He said if investigations confirmed the suspicion, then legal action would be taken.

Money politics, the Prime Minister said, cannot be allowed to spread in the country.

"If the Government can be bought, then not only democracy becomes meaningless but the nation too may be raped by the rich, and worse still by foreign powers," he said.

Dr Mahathir added: "One reason MPs and Assemblymen are elected by the people was that he was nominated by a certain party."

"If he no longer agrees with his party, then by right he should vacate his seat."

# Ling: We need new ideas and new vision

STAR 12 JUL 1987

## ● FROM PAGE TWO

ed. That is how we believe the party will progress best. This is what we mean by collective leadership, where no one dominates or seeks to dominate. I am pleased to report that never before have we been so united at the national leadership level. Every member of the team has contributed and pulled his weight behind the MCA.

The MCA has gone through one of the most turbulent periods in its 38-year history, that it survived intact and with a new spirit is proof of the resilience of the party. There will remain a lot of controversy about the effectiveness of the MCA. Let me state clearly that we in the MCA do not pretend that the party is faultless. We have our mistakes. But, we are determined to redouble our efforts to reform the party and to re-establish the MCA as a party of honour and dignity, to be loved, respected and supported.

Three years ago, we went through a divisive battle. That is behind us now. We have restored democracy to the party, thanks to the efforts of our members who were so committed to democratic reformation.

Let us from this day onwards, further strive to bring more reforms to the MCA, to once again make ours a dynamic, relevant and vital force in Malaysian politics. The reformation of the MCA is an on-going process and does not end with the mere adoption of a new democratic constitution. We need new ideas, new blood and a new vision. We need an attitudinal change among our leaders and members at all levels.

To forge ahead into the next century, the MCA and its members must not be afraid of changes. More importantly, we must be able to effectively manage strategic change for change is inevitable.

Every member has a role to play and a contribution to make. This is time for the party to close ranks and to unite to face the challenges ahead.

I wish to pay tribute to all our past leaders who have sacrificed for the party and the Chinese community. Your efforts will not be in vain and will long be remembered. The MCA was built by the sweat and toil of our predecessors. Let not the new generation of leaders forget the contributions of the party's veteran leaders. In fact, we can and should learn from them useful lessons, as they have laid a strong foundation for the present leaders to build on.

To meet the challenges ahead, I hope, if I am re-elected to establish a high-powered task force to strengthen the MCA and to make a detailed and comprehensive study to be entitled "Strengthening the MCA — The Way Ahead."

We need structural, policy and organisational changes to revitalise the MCA. We need new approaches to deal with old and newly-emerging problems. A task force will help determine the changing role of the MCA, set new directions and recommend new strategies for the party. I believe such a task force should comprise party veterans, old leaders, present leaders, academics, professionals and Chinese community leaders. They will help forge a new political consensus, a new political agenda for the MCA, that will be more relevant to the needs and aspiration of a younger and increasingly more sophisticated electorate.

Let me make one last point before I conclude this speech. I believe that in a multiracial country, all must always remember that democracy is not just majority rule. Democracy also ensures protection of minority rights and interests.

The MCA derives its support from the Chinese community. Hence, the MCA must continue to cultivate a good working relationship with the Chinese community. Toward this end, the MCA will have regular dialogues with leaders of Chinese guilds and associations. There shall be regular consultations between party and community leaders. The relationship between the MCA and the Chinese community must be further strengthened. I urged Chinese community leaders not to doubt the sincerity and commitment of MCA leaders.

I am pleased to report that a new sense of purpose and direction is emerging after the period of uncertainty and low morale which affected us last year. We have accomplished the key tasks of:

(i) Working towards a fair and just solution of the co-operative crisis. I am glad this has been achieved in an amicable manner in the true spirit of Barisan co-operation;

(ii) We have strengthened the board and management of the Multi-Purpose Group; and

(iii) We have fought a good, clean battle in Gopeng and retained the seat for the Barisan Nasional, with the full co-operation of our Barisan partners. The "Gopeng Spirit" will spur us on and is an important turning point for the party.

However, I believe that to meet the challenges ahead, the party must continue to be guided by the principles of collective leadership and accountability. Team effort is so important to enable us to overcome the challenges ahead in the political, economic, educational and cultural fields. Let us work together to strengthen unity and consensus in the party.

It was for this reason that the architects of our Federal Constitution in their great wisdom decided to write into posterity:

● Article 8 — the equality clause in the Constitution.

● Article 11 — where freedom of religion is guaranteed.

● Article 152 — where languages other than the National Language are fully protected.

This we deem as a central pillar of the Merdeka Agreement, and we will not be party to any attempt to change, dilute or weaken it.

Let me end by restating the role of the MCA in the Barisan Nasional. The MCA believes in the concept of inter-racial co-operation as expounded by the Barisan Nasional. In this regard, the MCA will continue to support the liberal, just and democratic policies of the Barisan Nasional and work together with our Barisan partners to fulfil the aspirations of the Malaysian people.

It must be remembered that the MCA participated in the Barisan Nasional because of our strong commitment to the principles of the Rukunegara and the constitutional contract that helped gain independence for our country. The MCA will remain steady and responsible and continue playing a moderate role. We will stand by the Rukunegara and the Merdeka Agreement. Our positions have not changed. We hope politicians of other parties will stand by the same principles of justice and equality, tolerance of diversity, guarantee of minority rights and freedom.

We are confident that if this commitment and vision is shared equally by all political leaders, Malaysia will be a much better place to live in.