

# BID TO SETTLE DISPUTE WITH 11

# WE MADE EVERY

# EFFORT — PM

14 FEB 1988

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Umno had made every effort to reach an out-of-court settlement with the 11 members over the suit challenging the validity of last year's April 24 party elections.**

However, the terms laid down by the 11 members had been "unacceptable", said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Firmly dispelling claims that the party leadership had not pursued an out-of-court settlement vigorously enough, he disclosed the terms demanded by the 11 members.

They had demanded his resignation as party president and the appointment of a successor of their choice in his place.

Dr Mahathir said the 11 were specific about who the successor should be. However, he did not say who it was.

When the Umno committee under vice-president Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, formed to settle the dispute,

proposed another candidate, the 11 rejected him.

"Their case was not actually a question of whether the April 24 general assembly last year was valid. They merely wanted the party president to be replaced by a certain person," he added.

He firmly believed the efforts for an out-of-court settlement failed because the 11 had entered negotiations without a "policy of give and take".

"This clearly shows that their actions are not in the interest of the party but to suit the interests of a particular person," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a dialogue with about 40 smallholders' representatives at the Prime Minister's Department.

The smallholders had asked why no serious efforts were made to persuade the 11 party members to withdraw their suit and why the Umno headquarters had not checked the validity of the 30 branches.

(The High Court had ruled on Feb 4 that Umno was an unlawful society because of the existence of the 30 illegal branches. At the same time, the court dismissed the claim by the 11 to have the

court declare last year's party general assembly null and void.)

On the existence of the 30 illegal branches, Dr Mahathir explained that it was practically impossible then for Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid to personally inspect and verify the 8,000 branches in the party.

"If Datuk Seri Sanusi takes one day to inspect and verify 100 branches, he will need at least three months to complete this job and do nothing else," he said.

"Therefore, Umno headquarters has to rely on reports filed by the various Umno divisions as to the validity of the branches," he added.

In addition, the Umno supreme council had also issued specific instructions to its divisions and branches on how to deal with this problem.

"So when there were no complaints of illegal branches, we thought all the branches had been duly registered and we convened the 38th general assembly last year.

"The 11 only brought up the existence of the illegal branches after the general assembly, and even then they did not bring the matter to the attention of the Umno supreme council but to the High Court."

Dr Mahathir also said the party made it clear to the 11 and their supporters that their decision to seek legal redress had dangerous implications as the court "does not rely on political sentiments but on the strict rule of the law".

"The result of all this is that Umno, in whose growth all of us played our part, has been declared unlawful by the High Court through the actions of this group of 11."

Earlier, in thanking delegation leader Haji Ahmad Mansor for conveying the pledge of support for him and Deputy Prime Minister Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba from the country's 500,000 smallholders, Dr Mahathir said there would be a small group of people who would continuously commit treachery against Umno and the Malays.

He quoted the Malay proverb *Tak dapat tandok, telinga dipulas* (cutting the nose to spite one's face) to refer to them.

He said they had resorted to the lawsuit to challenge the validity of the party's general assembly last year when they saw that the Government was enjoying the confidence of the people, the political situation was stable and the

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economy was on the path of recovery.

He added the group would not cease its actions although it had successfully seen to it that Umno was declared an unlawful society.

"In fact, I believe they will continue with other acts of treachery in future."

Dr Mahathir explained: "Whatever steps my colleagues and I take to revive Umno, they are bound to face attempts to ridicule and destroy the party."

In apparent reference to the move to form Umno Malaysia, he said the first step towards dividing the Malays had already been implemented.

He was afraid that if these moves were not checked, they would destroy Umno and weaken the political power

of the Malays.

"Let me stress here that their actions are only to suit their personal interests," said Dr Mahathir when advising Malays not to be taken in by the ploy of this group of people.

He said the Malay leadership was trying its best to revive Umno but it would take time.

This was unavoidable since there were many strict rules to be complied with.

Dr Mahathir also refuted allegations by certain quarters that the recent declarations of support for him and his deputy by political parties, organisations and individuals were not voluntary.

"There was no compulsion; the declarations were made voluntarily."