

Dr M may seek 'legal remedy'

NST 15 FEB 1988

Reports by SABRY SHARIF, NURAINJA SAMAD
and NOR HAWA YUNUS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today indicated the possibility of seeking legal remedy in Parliament to resolve the problem confronting Umno.

He said everything possible would be taken to resolve the problem including "taking legal action through Parliament".

Dr Mahathir, addressing a gathering of some 600 Barisan Nasional MPs, State Assemblymen and Senators at Parliament House, said: "The law of God cannot be changed. The laws of man are made to benefit the people, not to cause them problems."

Later, speaking to reporters, he said he would not make public details of the move to resolve the problem.

"Any army will not disclose its strategy. Otherwise it is no longer a strategy."

Dr Mahathir, who arrived to thunderous applause and cries of "Hidup Mahathir", urged all Barisan Nasional leaders to remain calm and be patient and to place their confidence in the Government.

He said if the Government appeared silent on the matter, it did not mean that nothing was being done to revive Umno.

"We do not go around telling people that we are doing something. We cannot do that because we know that there are people waiting for their cue. If we do something, they will

counteract to stop us from resolving the problem."

Dr Mahathir said these people will not stop even if the problem was solved.

"They will continue their actions. They will go to the various branches and divisions to influence members not to support certain leaders.

"They will try through whatever means to make Umno members betray (the party)."

Dr Mahathir urged members to beware and not to fall prey to this group.

The Prime Minister described the gathering today as a manifestation of the support and confidence the Government still enjoyed despite the problem now facing the party.

He said the gathering showed that the Government still commanded the support of the majority in the Dewan Rakyat and the State Assemblies.

Dr Mahathir said that in a democracy, a Prime Minister who had lost the confidence of more than two-third of the House, would have to resign.

The vote of confidence was therefore important to show the world that the Government was still strong.

Dr Mahathir said a strong Government would ensure political stability in the country to enable further economic growth.

He said Umno, as the backbone of the Barisan Nasional, had always been strong and stable and had effectively led the Government since independence.

Because Umno was strong, it was able to counter any political turbulence from the smaller coalition party members.

He said the country had also seen rapid development since independence because of political stability.

"I am confident the people — not only Umno members or the Malays but all the other races — regard the stability of Umno as important."

Dr Mahathir said Umno's strength had been derived from its "political tradition" rooted in democracy.

He had stressed as early as 1981 that this tradition be upheld to prevent disunity in Umno.

"Unfortunately, my views were rejected because there were people who wanted to grab certain posts in the name of democracy."

Dr Mahathir said during last year's Umno elections, he had stressed the importance of there not being any contest for the top party posts.

He said the very people who had disregarded party tradition refused to accept the decision of the majority.

Now Umno members must close ranks and work to resolve the problem facing the country, he said.