

ESSENTIAL CHANGES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Open attitude vital, says PM

By HARDEV KAUR

AN OPEN attitude, especially among the Malays and Bumiputeras, and a willingness to make changes in attitudes and approaches are essential to ensure even more success.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party needs to admit its own weaknesses which caused shortfalls in the New Economic Policy (NEP) objectives. The Government, according to him, has identified the weaknesses and has devised an approach which it believes can overcome them.

Opening the Umno general assembly at the Putra World

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Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government is prepared to make massive efforts and set aside sufficient allocations to redress the econo-

mic imbalance among the various races and to eradicate poverty. However, all parties must not only accept the policies but also "the way and approach" planned by the Government.

The new efforts, he said, are for the last decade of the 20th century. "We only have 10 years to achieve the aims. We have no time for petty issues." He pointed out that the Fifth Malaysia Plan period ends this year and a post-1990 programme has to be formulated.

He told the assembly that if plans alone ensured success,

Malaysia would be very successful today. He hastened to add that success will be ensured by "sincerity, hard work and organisation".

In his one-hour-35-minute presidential address, the Prime Minister touched on a wide range of subjects, including national development and economic progress, the future national economic plan, democracy, Umno election, the assault on the judiciary by the Bar Council and treason by certain trade unionists.

The Prime Minister said

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there is no denying that Malaysia has achieved tremendous success since independence. Per capita income, for example, has risen from \$775 in 1957 to \$6,147 in 1990 and this is despite the fact that the population has increased from six million in 1957 to over 17 million today. The country is more stable, peaceful and prosperous.

It also has a high profile in the international arena, having chaired a number of international forums, including the Group of 77, the Commonwealth, United Nations Security Council and the Group of 15.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia is still a developing country and needs investment, be it from local or foreign sources. He stressed that if industrial peace does not exist in Malaysia, no one will be willing to invest.

"Why should they expose their capital to losses? If there is no investment, there will also be no job opportunities. If there are no job opportunities, claims by whatever means for salary increases by workers cannot succeed."

With peace, investments will increase and entrepreneurs will rush to hire workers. This is happening in Malaysia. Because of this, wage levels have gone up without pressure of industrial action. The Prime Minister said if the Government is sometimes seen as adverse to industrial action, it is not because it is anti-worker, but rather because the Government is pro-worker.

"The Government wants their income and purchasing power to increase. With better income, the workers can buy more goods, which will boost the market, which will in turn spur other industries such as manufacturing, import, transport, oil and one thousand and one other business activities which are labour intensive. The Government's coffers will also rise and the benefits will also rebound on public sector employees," he added.

The Prime Minister reminded Malaysian trade unionists not to believe their Western

counterparts who declare that their sympathy lies with Malaysian workers.

He pointed out that Western unionists' interference had undermined the industrial harmony of many countries. The negative influences of Western trade unionists had adversely affected industrial harmony in South Korea and Taiwan, which at one time were riding high. Some Western countries suffered economic decline because there was no industrial peace.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir referred to the involvement of local unionists in politics, saying that their participation offered little gain to workers.

Other than in the communist countries, generally workers are a respected group in society and talented ones can look forward to a higher standard of living. "Children of a labourer need not end up as labourers. Upward mobility is a reality in this age," the Prime Minister said.

A society of different classes does not exist any more. Such has been the development of trade unions that workers receive salaries which are way above minimum wages. They live in luxury and can take industrial action which can create problems for society if their demands for yet more pay are not met.

In such a situation, should we continue to use industrial action to settle disputes between employers and workers? Strikes and other methods to force the employer to bow to workers' demand cause huge losses to both parties.

Industrial action becomes a burden to the public as in the end, it is the people who have to bear the higher costs when companies meet workers' claims. It is naive to think that only the employer will have to absorb the extra costs, the Prime Minister said.

He also spoke of the need for a balance between material achievement and spiritual development. He said: "We do not want a society which has achieved progress but has lost direction. This balance is an important factor influencing our efforts towards progress."