

PM: No simple

By Ahmad A. Talib

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his proposals for solving Bumiputeras' economic woes are not simple, but they could be implemented to achieve more lasting results if the community is willing to work hard.

He said the easier solutions to Bumiputeras' economic problems had been implemented with some success. But the very nature of the solutions had not encouraged the retention of wealth in the community.

"An Economic Planning Unit study has shown that most of the shares of restructured companies given to Bumiputera individuals at preferential prices had been sold for quick capital gains," said the Prime Minister at the closing of the three-day Umno general assembly.

Expanding on his keynote address last Friday when he urged Bumiputeras to "think big," he said future approaches would stress the retention and expansion of Bumiputera corporate wealth.

It was for this reason that priority was being given to large Bumiputera companies and trust corporations, he said, adding that these entities were better able to hold large equity in joint venture companies.

He said that for the new policy to work, Bumiputeras must change their attitude and be more willing to stand on their own rather than depend entirely on the government.

Dr Mahathir, in what is considered a soothing pep-talk to the delegates and observers, said Malays and Bumiputeras must learn to compete with other races on an equal footing if they wanted to redeem their dignity.

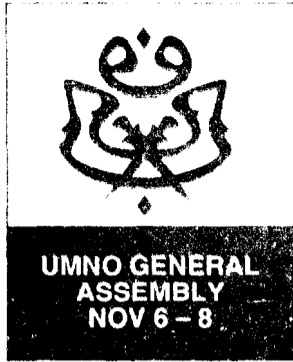
If this meant learning from the Chinese and other races and behaving like them, Bumiputeras must be willing to do so, he said, adding that it was impolite for some delegates to refer to other Malaysian races by the way they look.

"If looking like them can make one successful, we should perhaps be willing to look like them."

Dr Mahathir said the Japanese and Koreans had all succeeded because they practised excellent work culture, one that stressed excellence and was designed to make them competitive.

Even the British adhered to this at one time, but they have since declined.

Stressing this point, Dr



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Mahathir said Malays and Bumiputeras could never go far unless they discarded their old ways and replaced them with the kind of work culture based on knowledge and confidence.

Replying to comments by delegates who took part in the debate, he congratulated those who presented well-researched and well-thought out arguments, naming specifically Datuk Dr Affifuddin Omar's analysis of work ethics adhered to by the older generation of Malays.

He said Affifuddin has not only changed his opinion of some aspects of the Malay culture but has also inspired him.

Dr Mahathir said it was unwise and unfair to give all government contracts to Umno members as suggested by a delegate.

"It would not be fair because there are others who have just as much, if not more, qualifications to win them."

He said that giving all government contracts only to Umno members would only lead to resentment and

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approach

We must be fair to others, says Dr M

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this could cost the party the general election.

"We can't take everything and give them solely to Umno or the Malays. If we do this, I can only guarantee you one thing — we'll lose the election.

"We can't do this because we must be fair. If non-Umno members make a bid for any contract, and if their offers are better than those from Umno members, we have to consider them as

well.

"Many of these people are supportive of Umno and what it stands for."

In a speech which lasted almost 1½ hours, Dr Mahathir clarified and rebutted many issues raised by delegates in the debate on his address and the resolutions on economy and religion.

In a tone reflecting his patience on some of the issues raised, he said there was no short-cut to success.