

Accept party's choice, Dr M tells members

By Rosli Zakaria
and Azman Ahmad

KUALA TERENGGANU, Wed. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants members to accept the choice of candidates picked by the party to contest in the coming general election.

He also wanted Umno members to maintain party unity and discipline to ensure a convincing victory for the Barisan Nasional.

The hopes of the Prime Minister was relayed to Umno leaders in Terengganu during separate meetings he had with State liaison committee members at Rumah Tetamu here and with divisional committees, including the Youth and Wanita wings.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, when approached at the Sultan Mahmud Airport, after sending off Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, said:

"Dr Mahathir's aspiration is for Umno members to respect the decision of the party on the choice of candidates in the coming election. He stressed this aspect during the meeting with divisional committees."

Wan Mokhtar said Umno members should not argue with the decision on the candidates as the party had made careful consideration and selected the best candidates.

He added that Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of maintaining unity in the rank and file in the party as well as among the people to ensure continued success.

"We have to look back into history. The reason for the fall of the Islamic Government in Baghdad was because of internal strife while the defeat of the Islamic army in the Uhud war was because the soldiers failed to follow the leader's instruction."

He said these were the two closest examples and Umno members could learn a lesson from these incidents.

"We must avoid disunity and reject the attitude of not wanting to listen to the leader's advice. We have to listen to our leaders, especially when we are facing a critical period such as the general election," he added.

Asked if the advice of the Umno president had given new confidence to State Umno leaders and members, Wan Mokhtar said: "Definitely. We want to ensure that we continue to lead the development in the State."

On the list of candidates for the 32 State seats and eight parliamentary seats, Wan Mokhtar said some divisions had submitted the names while some had not.

"It will be discussed by the liaison committee soon. However, the criteria for a suitable candidate include, among others, that the person must have good qualifications and he must be popular. In addition, the person must be close to the people and able to work," he added.

The Prime Minister ar-

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rived here this afternoon for a short visit. He later addressed more than 1,000 people, including State executive councillors, heads of departments and Umno members, before breaking fast at Stadium Negeri here.

Also present were Dr Siti Hasmah, Wan Mokhtar, Public Enterprises Minister Datuk Dr Yusuf Nor and Deputy Primary Industries Minister Tengku Datuk Mahmud Mansor.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said extremist groups in the country would go to any length to try to influence the people, including calling for continuous support for their leaders who indulge in wrongdoings.

He said these groups appear to be able to control the minds of their followers so much so that these leaders could not be questioned, whether they were doing the right thing or otherwise.

Dr Mahathir said: "These people are *taksub* (obsessed) and they cannot accept what others say of their leaders. To them, what their leaders say, no matter how wrong, is still right. Thus, they will also make the mistakes of their leaders.

"We are lucky that in Ma-

laysia, such groups are small in number. Even if they are not many, they are still extremists and will believe in things without thinking whether it's right or wrong."

He added that the general notion that Islamic nations were always fighting with one another or that their people cannot live in harmony or Muslims cannot develop their countries, must be put aside.

"This is the notion of the enemies of Islam. But in Malaysia, we have proven that Muslim administrators in a multi-racial, multi-religious country, can steer the country towards continued success."

Dr Mahathir hoped that the people would be thankful always and would not make moves that could lead to anarchy in the country.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a report that he would be visiting Taiwan if invited and would also be inviting the Taiwanese to join the EAEC.

He said: "It is a report from Taiwan. But if I am invited, I will go but not as a Prime Minister. I will go in my personal capacity," he told reporters after a one-hour closed-door meeting with all eight Umno Terengganu divisional leaders and State Umno liaison committee at Rumah Tetamu in Batu Buruk here.

laysia, such groups are small in number. Even if they are not many, they are still extremists and will believe in things without thinking whether it's right or wrong."

He said that if the activities of such groups were not stopped, many people could be influenced and they would be making mistakes. In the end, peace and harmony could be threatened.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had enjoyed continuous peace and harmony which enabled the country to be developed and looked upon with respect by others, including the developed nations.

He added that Malaysia had become a model for both the developed and developing nations because of its extraordinary economic growth, stability and peace and harmony among people of various races, religions and cultures.

"In some countries, like Somalia, where the majority are Muslims, the people killed one another and some of them were left starving. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims are hunted and killed by their enemies.

"But in Malaysia, the Muslims and non-Muslims can live with one another because we can tolerate and respect one another. We must be thankful. God will bless us with more good things if we are thankful," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the country could achieve more if the people continue to live in peace.

"We also tried to make peace with the enemy but

Dr Mahathir said Taiwan can join the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) as an economic entity but not as a country.

He said there should be no reason why Taiwan could not join the EAEC as the country is a member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) in its capacity as an economic entity.

Asked about the meeting with the State Umno leaders, Dr Mahathir said it was a normal meeting to discuss general matters related to preparations for the general election.

"There would be a dry run as I had announced recently. I also took the opportunity to explain to them the meaning of dry run," he added.

Asked if he was satisfied with Terengganu Barisan Nasional's preparations for the election, he said: "I have received some feedback from the Menteri Besar. Some divisions are ready with the necessary preparations.

"But we still need to look at other things like a trial to test their ability to undertake the tasks before and during the general election."

Asked about whether the Government has decided to introduce guidelines for non-governmental organisations, Dr Mahathir said the Government had not decided.

"It was only talk but no decision was made on the matter. We have also not decided whether there is a need for guidelines," he added.