

# Cooperation vital for

I WISH to welcome everyone to this convention which is being held 44 years after the Alliance was formed. The Barisan Nasional was formed in 1974, but its concept of cooperation in our multi-racial country has been in existence well before that. It started with the first municipal elections in Kuala Lumpur in 1952. The cooperation, which is now the hallmark of the BN, began with the cooperation between Umno and the MCA in the election of municipal councillors then.

The product that we have today, that is the Barisan Nasional, is proof that cooperation is better and much more desired than confrontation. That the cooperation between Umno and the MCA way back in 1951 received much support was a positive manifestation of that relationship.

The cooperation was based on a simple formula. If Umno put up a candidate in one particular area, then the MCA would not do so. This was also the case vice-versa. The supporters were simply urged to rally behind the candidate chosen to contest in that particular area. This made victory possible. This then was the background behind the cooperative spirit that we see today in the BN. I urge all of you not to forget this. It was from the cooperation of the Umno and MCA branches in Kuala Lumpur more than 40 years ago that helped give birth to a coalition that now numbers 14 component parties, with a membership strength of more than four million.

The expansion of the BN from only two parties in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council election in 1952 to 14 parties is truly extraordinary. This is truly extraordi-

tion is always threatened by withdrawals. Even small differences could lead them to withdraw, or threaten to withdraw. There is no real understanding, not in the BN sense. In Malaysia, we have seen how hopping from party to party has affected the political climate. The hopping from party to party would make any coalition unstable. This happens when there is insufficient majority in the House.

I was told of an experience in a foreign country which reflected this state of insufficient majority. It appeared that an elected representative had threatened to leave his party if he was not given a permit to get a Pajero (a 4x4 vehicle). On the strength of a Pajero, an elected representative can disrupt the stability of his country's political climate. Imagine that! In Malaysia, just because your area has no tarred road, or if the drains have no proper culverts, surely you are not going to withdraw your support from the BN.

In one of my foreign visits, I was asked by one Prime Minister to explain the country's multi-party political system. He and many others were amazed at our success, that a multi-party system actually works in Malaysia. This is because we uphold the principle of democracy. We believe that the people have a right to determine who they should

ers as infidels whom they say could not read the Quran.

We want opposition in our country. But you have to advise the voters that we don't want or need the present kind of opposition. These people take every opportunity to curse and swear at the Government. They abuse parliamentary immunity to do just that. You have to advise the voters not to pick this kind of people. I fear that their lack of understanding of the political system could lead

do not use democracy wisely, then we will not benefit from it. We must take the weaknesses into account if we are going to make democracy work. We must use democracy to form a strong and credible government. A leader from the West recently told me that his country had difficulties even though it only had two political parties.

Our system has brought about many benefits to the people. Our coalition would be weak if it was formed after an election. I was also asked whether it would not be better if we only have one party. I feel that if we had only one party, then the voice of the minority might not be heard, and they could then feel insecure. Under a one-party system, the voice of the minority would be drowned by the majority.

In the Barisan Nasional,

we accept certain realities that exist in our country. We must accept that we are in a plural society. This being so, we must accept that there are racial feelings within ourselves. That is also why we have race-based parties, but all working within the bigger party, the BN. We need the two-thirds majority if our work is to continue to be effective. Furthermore, no one can threaten us if we have such a majority. Our success has also discouraged our components from leaving us. If they leave, they automatically become opposition members. Anyone can leave the BN, but they would end up as members of the opposition.

The BN has always acted on the basis of the majority's interest. We have designed policies to look after the long-term interests of the country. Sometimes, these policies may not be popular with the people but they are necessary in the overall interests of the people and nation. We can formulate many policies but they would take a long time to show results. If the same government is allowed to continue to administer, even unpopular decisions can be implemented successfully. Everyone must realise that to practise democracy just for the sake of democracy would not be good. Democracy must be used to govern in the best interests of the country and its people. A good and effective government functioning within the framework of democracy must be given time to implement its policies. Do not limit it to a specific time-frame to stay in power.

It is the view of some quarters that limiting the time-frame for a particular

## QUOTE

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nary in terms of political achievement anywhere in the world. It is more common to see the break-up of big parties into smaller ones. This has often led to chaos and disharmony. But in the BN, the opposite is the norm. It has grown to become a giant. Even though the BN is a team of several parties, but in spirit we move as one. This was also the case during the days of the Alliance. We moved and acted as one. During elections, candidates are chosen from the many components within the ranks, and we can then see the resulting support across the board. The spirit of cooperation within the BN is vital and not easily forgotten.

It is this cooperative spirit and working together that has given the Government its credibility. The cooperative spirit that is within the BN is not seen in some countries in the West. Some Western societies do not seem to appreciate the need for a strong government. Weak governments cannot do much in the long-term interests of their countries. This perception of not wanting a strong government administering the country for a long period has led some countries in the West to limit the tenure of their governments. That is why some of their leaders have their terms restricted to only one or two terms. The people in these countries seem to be afraid of a strong government.

In Malaysia, we have many political parties. We do not have a two-party system like in some countries in other parts of the world. We can have many political parties because we are democratic. We can also have two-man political parties, if that is what we want. But if we adopt the two-party system in Malaysia, there will be people accusing us of not being democratic. There are weaknesses in this system. If there are too many political parties, then no single party can muster a majority to govern strongly.

We have seen, in this country and elsewhere, a coalition of political parties created after an election. This was a marriage of convenience, albeit a temporary one. It was obvious that the coalition was merely to enable them to form a government. This kind of coali-

have as their leaders. We believe that the voters are wise. Generally, our voters are wise but of course there are some whose decisions are not so wise. Over the years, when the voters had no electricity, we gave them electricity; where they had no water supply, we gave them water supply; where they had no schools, we gave them schools. And yet there are some people who still insist that we have not provided them with what they want. For instance, they complain that their children have to walk 100 yards to get to school ....

Some people believe that the country also needs an opposition. In any democratic government, there must be an opposition. But let me tell you that the DAP is not an opposition. It doesn't oppose logically. It has been proven so many times that the DAP would oppose just because it is an opposition party. Sometimes, it would oppose well before the Government said or started anything. If you ask them why they oppose, the answer you will get is because it is an opposition party! Well, that's the DAP for you.

Some members of the opposition adopt a fanatical position. Ordinary members of this set of opposition parties believe that everything is wrong, unless said otherwise by their leaders. This is their narrow view. They go round believing that their leaders are always right even though they have committed obvious offences. To them, as long as their members or leaders wear skull-caps, are turbaned, wear robes or sport a beard, they can't be wrong. In the BN and elsewhere, there are a lot of people who wear turbans and who sport beards ... look at Harjit Singh.

In some countries, some people will carry the Quran to fight the police. The Quran is not for this purpose. It is to be read and understood. In Malaysia, there are opposition people who use religion to pursue their political struggle. They even label people as *kafir* (infidels). Sometimes, they even accuse their parents of being infidels because their folk do not subscribe to their political beliefs. Are they saying that they are born of parents who are infidels? They also charge oth-

them to pick the wrong representatives. They must be told not to reject the Government just because there is no tarred road in front of their houses. They must not make injudicious choices which they may regret later.

We subscribe to democracy even though it is not 100 per cent good. Democracy is a creation of man, and therefore there are weaknesses in the system. If we

we have a place for everyone. Each component of the BN has three representatives in the Supreme Council. If they are not made elected representatives, they could be appointed as senators or given other posts within the political set-up. Therefore, they have avenues where their voices can be heard. It is important that in the BN, their views are taken into account.

It is also important that

government would eliminate the possibility of dictatorship. But let me ask this — the BN has been in power for more than 40 years. Has it lost sight of its objectives, of creating a successful Malaysian nation? This convention is to remind us of our objectives and commitment. It is also to remind us that we are doing this not because we want to be a Yang Berhormat and sit on a soft, comfortable chair,

# BN success

but rather to serve the people. We need to always look at our role, but the mainstay of our struggle is always the people and their interests. If we truly uphold this belief, then no one should be angry if they are not selected to contest in the election. We are in this struggle not because we want to be a YB, Minister or Prime Minister. The BN is still in power because the people continue to support us and we need this power in order to develop our country.

We were given an important lesson via the racial riots of 1969. This led us to reject the 1969-style of politics. In some countries, the political struggle involves killings and acts of terrorism. Such acts would eventually lead to loss of respect, chaos and no growth. De-

like Malawi and Madagascar. Some thought that we were in the Himalayas. Some said we're near Singapore. Today, we tell people that Singapore is near us. Today, we no longer have to tell people where we are located. Our international role is also known. Many of us, when we're abroad, would say that we're Malaysian first, and our racial origins second, if at all. I am a Malaysian, they would all say.

As we march forward, we have set targets for the nation. This is spelt out in Vision 2020. Vision 2020 is ours. To achieve this, the BN must continue to administer the country. To help us realise this, we are introducing a charter which component parties are going to endorse at this convention.

take this convention lightly. Do not forget to work hard. Do not forget to improve discipline. Remember that we need another 25 years to reach the year 2020, when we hope to be a developed nation. We need at least another 25 years to implement all the policies that we have formulated. Only then can we be regarded as equals. All of us must also realise that we are not working for ourselves, but rather for our children, our grandchildren. In other words, we are working for the future generation. This is the Malaysia that we want. No one else can make this happen, except ourselves.

At this juncture, let me repeat my plea regarding the choice of candidates for the election. All BN parties must support whoever is chosen to contest in the election. Support the party regardless of the person selected. I've said that we may pick candidates who may not be linked to any party within the coalition. He may be asked to contest on a BN ticket. But this is only a test. We have not decided on this yet. If the person is selected, and wins in the election, then he may join whichever party he wishes after the polls. This should be seen as part of the BN's process of evolution and expansion. Hence, I hope there will be no more questions once the candidates have been picked to contest.

The spirit of cooperation in the BN is like an abacus. You pull here and push there, it all adds up very well. It is on this note that the convention is held so that we can all remind ourselves of our responsibilities to the country and people. The BN's growth has no comparison with that of any other party in the world. Even though we come from different backgrounds, we can work together. Sometimes, our differences are so obvious, for instance, in our dietary choices. But we've managed to overcome this because we became sensitive to each other's situations, do's and don'ts. God willing, if we continue to show the same kind of sensitivity in the spirit of give and take, we can proceed towards the targets of Vision 2020.

## QUOTE

**If we do not use democracy wisely, then we will not benefit from it. We must take the weaknesses into account if we are going to make democracy work.**

democracy could pave the way for economic expansion if it was properly used. It took the communist countries some 70 years to realise this. Some may believe that it is proper to rob the rich to help the poor, just like Robin Hood. In government, we have an almost similar arrangement. This is the income tax. We tax the rich a little in order to help the poor. This is done through proper legislation. When we reduced the amount to be collected for income tax to 30 per cent, we found that the affected people continued to make money. In the past, the tax rate was 45 per cent. They often argued that they don't have to work hard because 45 per cent of their income goes to the taxman. With 30 per cent, they work harder and they also save more.

Today, our success is well known. In the past, foreigners would scratch their heads trying to figure out our geographical location. Some would guess that Malaysia was in Africa, just

This is our oath of struggle, our declaration. The charter is more for us than for the rakyat. It is to remind us of our responsibilities. All of us must remind ourselves that we have a heavy duty to perform. We have produced results and provided the channels for progress. No country, including the developed countries, have recorded more than eight per cent economic growth in the last seven years. On top of that, we also have low inflation. This is the kind of success that many countries envy and seek to emulate. I always say that we are an open book for others to examine and learn.

But we must not take this for granted. If we are not careful, we could end up like Mexico or some other country. The charter will help us to keep working hard at our spirit of cooperation and tolerance. Unless this is done, we may end up being a poor nation. Therefore, once the charter has been endorsed, we must never forget to stick closely to it. Do not