

14/12/1998

Dr M: Umno for the nation (HL)

Rashid Yusof

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - In a speech in which he repeatedly stressed the importance of a strong, united and credible Umno, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a weak party would deprive the country of political stability and a credible Government with power.

The party president said Umno was not just a party, being the thrust and foundation of the Barisan Nasional which rules the country.

"If Umno is weak, BN will be weak. If BN is weak, the Malaysian Government is weak and if the Malaysian Government is weak, Malaysia will fall under colonialism," he said in his speech at the outset of the Umno extraordinary general meeting to amend the constitution. (Full text of speech on page 12)

As he outlined the importance of a credible and united Umno, Dr Mahathir explained how the party's unity and discipline was linked to aspects of governance and the effectiveness of BN.

For this, Dr Mahathir traced the early days of Umno, the incident-free elections, post-Independence achievements and how the Umno-led administration was able to resolve the 1969 riots without foreign intervention. He said all these were the result of the strength of Umno as a political party.

Citing the riots, he said anarchy and chaos could have erupted if not for the fact that Umno stayed united and did not question the right of leaders during the period.

On governance, the Prime Minister said Umno leaders were able to carry out their jobs well due to the solid support by the party, which in turn, ensured all government staff like administrators, police or army officers respected and abided by Government policies and approach.

"If there is a split in Umno and the leaders do not receive the mandate and support from the party, none from among the members of the armed forces, the police and government servants will respect the directives of the Government formed by the party."

Depicting the links further, Dr Mahathir said the unity and discipline of Umno has enabled the country to repeatedly overcome crises. This was besides governing and developing the country successfully.

At the same time, the existence and effectiveness of the Alliance and then the BN also depended on unity and discipline in Umno.

He added that to this day Malaysia continued to successfully provide a credible Government with the formula created by Umno founders being still applicable.

"The key to all these is a credible Umno," he said.

Against this backdrop, he said it was the responsibility of all Umno members, and in fact every Malay and other Bumiputera, to ensure that Umno would continue to be strong and credible.

On the tradition of the Umno president becoming Prime Minister, he said the party president would only hold the top position if Umno wins in the general election.

In this context, the Prime Minister posed these questions: Will Umno lead the Barisan Nasional to win the election? Will Barisan Nasional continue to accept Umno if Umno is weak? Will Barisan Nasional get majority seats in every election?

This hinged on Umno's strength as a political party, he added.

The same applies to attempts by foreign powers to colonise the country

again. Whether or not they succeeded was in the hands of Umno members.

"As long as Umno is solid and strong, as long as the unity in Umno is not shattered, the attempts by foreign powers to cripple and recolonise the country will fail," he added.

He also touched on party elections, saying that the party was more important than individuals. The party, he made clear, would long outlive individuals.

The one-agenda extraordinary meeting was attended by 1,900 delegates.

\* MORE REPORTS ON P2, 3, 4, 6 & 7

(END)