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The will to win

THE country's struggle for independence has produced many examples of great intelligence, courage and sacrifice. The loss is essentially ours if we, the rakyat, fail to emulate these examples or, better still, rival them in terms of their greatness in the country's march into the next millennium.

No example is, perhaps, greater than the show of unity by our forefathers in the struggle to liberate the country from the yoke of colonialism and build the nation. Unity is the sacred element that determines the extent of the nation's achievements. The resounding message of unity in the 53rd Umno general assembly should be extended to the rest of the citizenry. Needless to say, as the core of the Barisan Nasional coalition, the developments within the party bear some significance on the country.

The party's renewed vigour to oppose any form of exclusivist and chauvinist politics is ideologically desirable as it is politically necessary in a multi-ethnic country. As pointed out by Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Umno is a party which benefits Bumiputeras as well as the other races as seen, for example, from its success in breaking the stranglehold of poverty on all the races. The display of solidarity by members, in spite of the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue, reflects the party's maturity in rising above the divisive squabble of petty politics. In doing so, the party reflects the desire of every peace-loving Malaysian to reject the politics of those who divide people of the same faith, who sow calumny and suspicion and who indulge in the partisan politics of hatred.

In purging the party of treacherous events in recent months, Dr Mahathir has restored the party to its original objective of devoting itself to the service of the Bumiputera community and, ultimately, the nation. Evidently, its members refuse to substitute the party's principles with a personality cult. The legacy of the party's past leaders and the sacrifices of members would be in vain if members go astray in the greed for office and power. Self-serving politicians will only precipitate a domestic political crisis which, inadvertently, compromises national security as well. In abjuring the trivial and irrelevant, there is now a clarity of purpose in the party's struggle and relevance to the community it seeks to represent.

The party's confidence in winning the general election in the near future is not misplaced. People look towards the party and its allies precisely for the reason that, in the past and present, only the BN coalition has been able to run a stable and successful Government. But Dr Mahathir's numerous calls in the past to party members, its allies and the opposition to purge the country of money politics should be heeded. Democracy will be vitiated if election results are arrived at, not on their merits, but because money plays a part in bringing about these results. In such a situation, the form and trappings of democracy may continue but the spirit underlying democratic institutions will be put at stake.

The rakyat must maintain their vigil against the attempt by foreign elements to usurp their will to elect a Government of their choice. In truth, those who make calls for a change in the leadership are obliging prisoners of a virulent ideological agenda which is distinctly at odds

with Malaysia's nationhood. The unfettered right of the rakyat to choose a leader of their preference must be guarded jealously.

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