

Reject all forms of corruption, says Dr Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in the wake of widespread calls to eliminate money politics, today made another impassioned plea to Umno members to reject all forms of corruption and expose those who offer bribes.

“So, please help. Love our race. Love our children, grandchildren. Reject corruption ... reject all, in-

cluding offers to go on tours and perform umrah.

“Reject all that smells of corruption for the love of the race, because our race will be looked at with contempt and will in the end be destroyed and become a humiliated and ignorant race which has lost its dignity,” he said when opening the one-day Umno special general assembly.

His voice breaking and a little choked at times, the party president said Umno could still fulfil its

□ TRANSLATION OF SPEECH: P 12 & 16

promises to the people, Malays and other Bumiputera groups as well as the religion and country.

“Let us not only perpetuate our performance, but also further cleanse our party of any bad practices such as corruption. Every Umno member is responsible in this endeavour. Expose and reject the crime (of graft) and put the race, religion and country first.”

Dr Mahathir said the party's constitution amendments were “merely to shape the structure”.

But this structure needs to be covered with the right kind of attitude and qualities that can make a success of Umno's struggle.

“By itself, the constitution cannot guarantee that bad practices and destruction caused by them do not happen. Laws have never

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Dr Mahathir: Corruption will destroy our society

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eliminated crimes. Laws only curb them. What does save and advance the society is the tradition it possesses. It is the same with Umno," he said.

Speaking at length against graft, Dr Mahathir spoke about the danger of making it acceptable or a part of the Malay tradition.

"Corruption is a crime that will certainly destroy the society which practises it.

"There will be those who say that they receive just a little, but on the other hand the people they help to promote will receive much more.

"So, they will ask what is so wrong with them receiving a little reward ... if they don't take it, others will."

He said with this sort of thinking, corruption could never be wiped out.

He spoke about the implication of this on a ruling party. "If Umno accepts corruption as a normal practice, then surely we will get a president and Prime Minister who buy his position. It will be the same with other leaders. What kind of government will we have in Malaysia? Can we believe in a government comprising the corrupt?"

He also touched on a malaise of Umno — ageing, quite common in political parties that are advancing in age.

In such a situation, there is always a need for rejuvenation by making amendments to the constitution.

This is because sometimes the constitution of a party is found to be less able to further its cause or struggle or unexpected problems have arisen.

"The proposals to amend our constitution are to make sure that the objective of our struggle is not disrupted by changes in attitude that have already taken place in our party and society."

Dr Mahathir spoke about the wisdom of carrying on a struggle like a true fighter without fearing disap-

pointment. He made comparisons between those who fought for a civilisation and its advancement and the heirs of that civilisation who only knew how to enjoy and reap the benefits they inherited.

He struck a parallel with what is happening in Umno when he compared the struggle of Umno's pioneers, who have made the party what it is today, and those who merely fought to win positions.

Dr Mahathir reminded Umno members that although the party was 54 years old and had achieved a lot of success, unprecedented in the history of the Malays, its success was nevertheless fragile.

"Umno members have the right to be proud of its success... but this is fragile and can break and shatter into pieces. When it breaks, believe me, the Malays will fall with it."

Dr Mahathir said to prevent this, Umno members should ensure that party leaders did not behave like those heirs who only fought for positions, but were like the early pioneers.

"They must work hard, make sacrifices to increase the wealth and capabilities of the Malays to defend themselves and their civilisation. These words of wisdom are useless without a sense of realisation, attitude and effort."

But, Dr Mahathir said for Umno to prosper, changes and reforms had to be effected by the younger generation. The older generation, whose contribution would always be valued, would have to give places to younger leaders.

On the setting up of Puteri Umno, he said it was to provide an avenue for young Malay women to express their views.

But this did not mean Wanita Umno was blocking the entry of young women.

Puteri Umno, he said, was for those who were a little uncomfortable being alongside long-time members and leaders of the movement. "They do not feel confident expressing themselves and to have influence over such a body."