

Dr M: Umno should accept non-Malay PM in future

SUN 18. 6. 2000

'Country's constitution does not stipulate leader must be of a certain race'

Umno should accept the fact that in the future, the country may have a non-Malay prime minister.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this is possible as the country's constitution does not state that the prime minister has to be a Malay.

"The signs are there that it is already heading towards that direction, as the country's races begin to see themselves more as Malaysians and not their racial origin," he said in his opening address.

When asked if this will go down well with Umno members, the Prime Minister said: "I think Umno generally accepts leaders who are dedicated to the country. Of course, it will take time as there will be those who will find it difficult (to accept).

"I am not trying to do something that will make Umno increase their dislike for me, I am just stating facts.

"Any Malaysian regardless of race has a right to be the prime minister"

He said when the Chinese and Indian communities are accepted by all races, then the country's prime minister will not be restricted to Malays, stressing that even a non-Malay bumiputra can be prime minister.

He said the BN component parties must work together towards eradicating racism and forming a Malaysian identity.

"The BN (component) parties are very important in order to build an acceptance from people generally. We do not want to emphasise on (racial) differences but on similarities," he said.

On whether this means there will be more allocation of Cabinet posts to non-Malays, Mahathir said: "Once racialism is done away with, then it is possible that people do not think of a person as Chinese, Indian or Malay, they think of a person as Malaysian."

How soon this will happen, he said, depends on the people but added that the process towards this is already

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happening.

He said the New Economic Policy (NEP) has succeeded in integrating the country's races and not the other way around as suggested by critics.

He said while some Chinese do not agree with the NEP, at the same time, there are many Malays who are dissatisfied with it.

In his address, Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, called for more genuine business partnerships be-

tween the bumiputra and Chinese communities.

"It should be genuine because bumiputra businessmen must learn from their Chinese counterparts," he said, adding that Ali Baba-type partnerships where the bumiputra partners are merely in the forefront will not help in the transfer of expertise as they will not learn anything.

He advised bumiputra businessmen to learn from the Chinese.

"In fact Malaysian Chinese have more business acumen than other Chinese communities in the world."

Meanwhile, Mahathir declined to comment on a report in a Malay daily that the Law Ministry will be re-established to cater to growing judicial issues.

"I don't know, you have to ask *Utusan (Utusan Malaysia)* which carried the report," he said, adding that he has not heard anything.