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Umno members should be united to meet future challenges

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I HAVE been watching rather closely the media coverage of the forthcoming Umno party elections.

Frankly, being an Umno member and a proud Malaysian, I am rather concerned about the current developments because of their implications on the nation's continued stability and Malay unity.

It appears that Umno has to face its moment of truth as it stands before the threshold of a new political era.

With the close of the recent general election, it is high time that Umno members accept the reality of the current political trend. They must realise that there are still challenges ahead and that they have to be prepared for them before Umno's foes decide its destiny.

It is unsettling to note that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has indicated that this would be his last term. Malaysians have never been so secure and safe as under his guardianship. While some so-called Malaysians continue to be critical of him without any consideration for his sacrifices, Dr Mahathir has always remained a tolerant figure displaying exceptional maturity.

He has always had the interest of his nation at heart. And to carry on the struggle for the Malays and the nation, he has chosen Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Pak Lah), a noteworthy and capable leader, to assume the reins.

Contrary to the belief of some, Umno's struggle is not over yet and its members must unite under the imminent leadership of Abdullah to face the ever-changing world and regain the confidence of our stray brethren.

We have to examine the political trend and strengthen Umno to make it the single, vital party to bring about effective change in the collective interest of our race and nation.

Uniting with our stray brethren will not be an easy matter. While the fault may lie with others, as mature Malays, we must strive for unity to shape our own destiny and that of future generations, not to mention, their continued security and prosperity.

It is unfortunate that they who have gone astray have stressed on a political awakening and reformation when in fact, the Malays have never been deprived economically, particularly under the NEP and NDP. It is hoped that they will come to terms with the truth and cease being made puppets of by other parties who will stop at nothing to achieve their aims.

Our recent experience from the economic turmoil should also serve as a lesson to us.

It has inadvertently demonstrated what our enemies are capable of and how close we came to losing our dignity and pride.

Likewise, our past successes do not mean that our glory and dignity will be permanent. Challenges and danger continue to prowl all the time. It is imperative that Umno be alert at all times and remain united against forces trying to bring it down.

Malaysia, or for the matter, Umno, has never been free of accusations and allegations that democracy is non-existent as there has not been a clear change of leadership in recent years. But then, isn't it part of democracy if the continuity of leadership is the wish of the majority?

Democracy may avail us of the right as members to elect new leaders but the very fact that one would not stop at anything for one's personal

benefit, under the guise of democracy, should not be taken lightly.

Indeed, the practice of democracy should be watched with caution so that it is used wisely and not for the benefit of certain parties who are "wolves in sheep's clothing."

In any case, democracy may bring about changes but it has its price. Do we need to draw reference to the unfortunate incident of May 13 or for that matter, the turmoil that has befallen our neighbours, particularly, Indonesia? Need it be said further that democracy has never been a tool for mankind in the interest of the human race?

To all my Malay brethren, particularly Umno members, I ask that they exercise caution in their actions/decisions and not be influenced by false ideals and self-seeking individuals. Let's set aside our differences and transform our efforts and resources into sincere sacrifices in the interest of unity and the nation's stability.

We certainly do not need camps and factions within Umno as they would ultimately destroy the party.

Let it be known that Umno is not a vehicle for one's personal political aspirations or economic gain.

As the old adage goes "United we stand, divided we fall". Let's not forsake the efforts of our leaders who have fought so hard for Umno's glory.