

Three tasks for Umno Youth

SUN, 30 MAY 2001

Mahathir directs members to go on election footing immediately

By R. Manirajan

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today directed the party's youth wing to go on election mode with immediate effect.

He gave Umno Youth three tasks in preparation for the next general election due only in 2004.

The tasks require members to recruit five members each, get members to register as voters and set up election operations centres at branch and division levels.

Mahathir's directive comes in the wake of Umno Wanita's offensive against the Opposition by launching its *Ketua 10* (10 chiefs) election machinery operation as an ongoing campaign, possibly running up to 2004.

Appointed Umno supreme council member Dr Norraesah Mohamad told *The Sun* in an exclusive front page report today that the party is preparing to garner support "as things don't look so good right now for Umno and the Barisan Nasional in general".

Speaking to about 7,000 youth delegates from all over the country at Putra World Trade Centre today, Mahathir said the tasks are a "practical test" of Umno Youth's ability to implement the tasks efficiently.

"I will be visiting Umno divisions around the country soon. All

the divisions must have their operations centres set up by then, with the names of new members and those registered as voters."

Also present at the gathering were Umno deputy president Datuk

Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob.

Mahathir told the newly elected division leaders and youths to go to

the ground to meet the grassroots.

"The Malays before Independence were poor and worked in Umno as volunteers. They used bicycles or even walked, and did not use Mercedes Benz when going to

meet the people," he said.

"But now, the Malays are rich and nothing can be done today without money. If money is wrongly used to influence decisions, we will become the victim."

The problem the party is facing now, said Mahathir, is that many Umno members do not go to the ground to meet the people.

He told the youths to understand the importance of democracy as not doing so could damage the party and country.

"We have to be disciplined in a democracy, if we do not know how to use it, we won't be able to groom good leaders," he said.

"Many in Umno do not understand the intricacies of democracy. Instead, some are aligned to certain individuals.

"If we do not know how to practise democracy appropriately, democracy will destroy the party. Whenever there is an election, half the number of members will disappear.

"Youths should not follow the way senior party members practise democracy," he said.

Hishammuddin said the movement will activate its election machinery at all branches and divisions immediately.

"Weak branches and divisions will be given special attention."

He said commitment from the 850,000 youth members will ensure a successful recruitment drive for the party.