

TIME TO ACT

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Dr M vows to crack down on Umno members involved in unethical activities

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that he is through with begging and crying to try and make Umno members mend their ways.

The Umno president said he would now get tough with those involved in unethical activities, particularly money politics.

"I have tried asking nicely, begged and even cried, but no more of that. Money politics is the worst kind of disease which can cause Umno to rot from within.

"I am a doctor and I believe that when gangrene sets in, the affected part must be amputated so that it will not kill the body," Dr Mahathir said in his speech at a gathering of about 3,500 Umno veterans at the Putra World Trade Centre in conjunction with the party's 55th anniversary.

Dr Mahathir said he did not fear that his tough stand would turn some members against him.

"I don't ask anyone to love me, just to love the party. I am a mortal just like you, but hopefully, Umno will live for as long as the Malays are around," he added.

Members who were involved in money politics and bought votes, Dr Mahathir said, were actually teaching the Malays to be corrupt.

He said that in time these people, especially if they became leaders, would be willing even to trade off the race and the country just to get what they wanted.

Dr Mahathir urged party members to support his actions so that Umno could regain its credibility in the eyes of the people, even if those found guilty were their close friends.

"What is happening within Umno like corrupt practices and fighting for posts is a bad omen for the Malays.

"If they fail to heed the early warnings and check these practices from spreading, they are destined to repeat the same mistakes committed by their forefathers which had led to the country being colonised for more than 450 years," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he realised that many corrupt Umno leaders would still escape action, but this did not absolve those found guilty of such actions by the disciplinary board.

Speaking to reporters later, the Umno president said no one in the party would be exempted from action if they were found guilty of wrongdoing.

"I am willing to be sacked from the party if it can be proven that I am guilty of any

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unethical conduct," he said.

Asked if the party would introduce a new system which could check bribery among members vying for posts, Dr Mahathir said all kinds of conditions, including the quota on the number of nominations a candidate must receive before being eligible to contest for a specific post, had been introduced but most had backfired.

"The truth is, they are greedy and unethical. If they feel responsible to the party, they would put the interest of the party before their own. That is the basic responsibility of being a member," he said.

On the education issue, Dr Mahathir, when asked if the Government would change the 55:45% quota on bumiputra and non-bumiputra intake into local universities, said that the Government could not make a decision based on sentiments.

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