

27/08/2001

All can join in party struggle, says Dr M

Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he provided everyone the opportunity to join in the struggles of Umno and never envisaged that some would use the party for their interest or that of their respective groups.

The Umno president said the party had also accepted back many people who were at one time in enmity with him, and among them were those truly sincere in pursuing the party struggles.

"However, there will surely be those who are insincere. I cannot read what is in their minds. I am a normal person. At times I do make mistakes and I do not know it until much later."

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after launching the 4th International Conference on Tamil Internet at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He was asked on the statement by the Information Ministry parliamentary secretary Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin yesterday that his (Dr Mahathir's) biggest "mistake" was to bring into Umno revolutionary elements who failed to embrace the party spirit.

Zainuddin was reported to have said that the Prime Minister, therefore, had to pay a very high price for his political mistake.

Dr Mahathir also said Umno members who were unhappy with the action taken against them by the party's disciplinary board, could appeal to the supreme council and the appeals board.

"Of course, everyone would say that they are not guilty of the offence. They can submit their appeals but if the (appeal) board feels there is strong evidence to implicate them, then we will abide by the conviction.

"However, if there is suspicion or insufficient evidence, we have to reconsider the disciplinary board's decision. We must be fair to all quarters."

He was asked on the statements of innocence by some of those found guilty by the disciplinary board for offences relating to money politics during the party divisional elections in April and May.

On Tuesday, board chairman Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen had announced that eight divisional and branch leaders were stripped of their posts.

They include Bukit Bintang head Datuk Abdul Azim Mohd Zabidi, Pasir Puteh head Kamaruddin Mohd Nor, Kuantan vice-head Datuk Faisal Abdullah, former Ipoh Timur head Datuk Yahya Shafie and Bukit Bintang secretary Datuk Ruslan Omar.

In May and June, 12 officials, including five division heads, were suspended for periods ranging from one party election to six years.

On the militant movements in the country, Dr Mahathir said although there was a need to table a White Paper on the matter, it could not be done at present as the matter would be brought to the court.

"If we table a White Paper now, the detailed information given could be seen as influencing the court in reaching a decision.

"The Opposition is claiming that this is the Government's sandiwara (stage play) and thus, the people are now confused over the issue."

He said the Opposition resorted to label everything as sandiwara, even in cases when people were killed.

"It proves that they are bankrupt of ideas as they cannot even argue their way out, beyond saying that it's sandiwara."