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Don't weaken BN, party advised

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on the MCA, as an important Barisan Nasional component party, to resolve its problems without weakening the party. He said this was necessary for the strength of the BN, the country and Bangsa Malaysia.

"Our future depends on the BN. We must ensure the BN remains a coalition that is very strong. And to be a very strong coalition, its component parties must be strong.

"Because of that, we are all responsible for ensuring that if there are problems that afflict our party, we must resolve them wisely so that our party is strong," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman and Umno president, said the MCA, like Umno, was a key component in the BN.

"Take care of the MCA. There may be problems but they can be resolved without weakening the party.

"There may be differences in opinions but the fact is that you are all in one party, from one race, and because of that take care of the MCA for the strength of BN, for the country and Bangsa Malaysia," he said when opening the 48th MCA general assembly at Wisma MCA in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the MCA has always been with Umno in the country's struggle. Co-operation between the two parties went back to the Kuala Lumpur Municipality elections in the early 50s and later the MIC also joined in.

"The coalition was so successful that even the Opposition copied us. But we all know that imitation goods are not of the same quality," Dr Mahathir quipped.

He added the MCA and Umno were the backbones of the Alliance and later the BN.

"It is very important that we have strong backbones. We do not want to have weak backbones."

Dr Mahathir said when Umno was declared illegal, the other backbone - the MCA - took over the leadership of the BN and managed it well until Umno's return.

He thanked the MCA, saying that when Umno was illegal the MCA never gave its support to splinter groups of Umno.

"The MCA was loyal to Umno and Umno will be loyal to MCA. Both parties must be taken care of. Both must be strong to maintain the BN. That is the joint responsibility, of both MCA and Umno members," Dr Mahathir said.

He said party problems could be resolved wisely and in a way that the whole entity remained strong.

Dr Mahathir said co-operation between Umno and MCA had led to the formation of a party that represented all races and which since independence had contested and won 10 general elections.

"Co-operation has delivered all the things we expected of this country. Not many developing countries can be as successful as Malaysia. It is a developing country that is among the most progressive of developing countries."

The country, Dr Mahathir said, was politically stable even though Malaysians were of different races, ethnicity, religions and cultures.

He said unlike places like Northern Ireland, the Middle East and South Asia, Malaysians could live, work and play together and were prepared to

help each other to ensure that all got a fair share in the country.

"We distribute rights so that no one is left out. No one race gets all it wants. The Malays, Chinese, Indians, Kadazans and Ibans cannot get 100 per cent of their demands. If one race gets 100 per cent it will not be fair," Dr Mahathir said.

He said stability was essential for the country's development without which there would be no investments by both foreigners and locals.

Dr Mahathir said while Malaysia used to depend on rubber and tin, it was now industrialised and able to produce world quality goods using local labour.

"That is why even though the world economy is not doing well, Malaysia is able to produce many types of goods for export.

"All this depends on the dynamism of Malaysians, mostly from the Chinese community," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Chinese were willing to work with other races and that was why when the New Economic Policy was being drafted, the Chinese community agreed to it so that the Malays could also benefit from the country's wealth.

He said when the country faced economic difficulties there were no racial riots unlike other countries and the Chinese were not accused of being saboteurs.

"As there were no riots, we could recover better than other countries which took aid from international agencies," he said.

Dr Mahathir cautioned the Chinese community not to be taken in by the Barisan Alternatif, especially Pas which he said had been asked to state what form of Islamic state it wanted to form but till today had not done so.

"Pas says something to the Malays and something else to non-Malays. I hope the Chinese are not fooled by Pas," he said.

At a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir was asked about the fracas at MCA Youth's 38th annual meeting which saw chairs being hurled and verbal abuse traded.

He said these things happened and that it had happened before in the MIC, later in Umno and now in MCA.

"They are all aware that the MCA is too important a party to be weakened by some differences. Differences can be resolved," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if the matter had something to do with the Nanyang Siang Pau/China Press issue, he said it was possible that some people were not satisfied with the issue, adding that that the issue had not been resolved yet in relation to ownership of shares.

On his call for MCA to be united, Dr Mahathir said sometimes there were differences in opinions among members.

"Whatever way differences are resolved, we must place priority on party interests," he said.

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