

12/05/2001

I have had enough, says Dr Mahathir of money politics

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the party to support the punishment of corrupt members, saying that he had had enough.

Speaking at the party's 55th anniversary celebration at the Putra World Trade Centre here, Dr Mahathir drew reference to the many instances when he issued passionate pleas for the party to reject money politics.

"I have urged, pleaded, cried. This time there is no more urging, no more pleading, no more crying.

"I ask for your support and the support of all Umno members for the action which we will take against those engaging in corruption."

Dr Mahathir said the buying of votes in Umno was damaging the Malays, and would lead to their ruin.

"True, there will be those involved in corruption whom we will not be able to detect, and as such we will not be able to take action against them.

"But that does not mean we will not take action against those whom we have found guilty."

Likening corruption in Umno to a patient suffering from progressive diabetes, Dr Mahathir said harsh action was needed before it was too late.

For example, Dr Mahathir said that a diabetic with a septic toe must have the rotting appendage severed, or the disease could spread to his body.

"So before the disease progresses, cut it out."

He said no one should appeal on behalf of those found guilty of money politics.

"If such is our attitude, we can never cure (the party) of this filthy disease."

Dr Mahathir said his message would draw its fair share of detractors.

"Some say that the president should not say such a thing because it now becomes a directive to the supreme council."

Dr Mahathir said it was believed by some that the supreme council would obey the party's "beloved president".

"I don't ask anyone to love me. Love Umno," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was also important for Umno to stamp out corruption. Non-partisan Bumiputera were turned off by the party, perceiving it to shelter corrupt leaders, he said.

The Prime Minister's 75-minute speech drew wide reference to the history of the Malays.

Dr Mahathir started by detailing some of the past glories of the Malacca Sultanate, which fell to the Portuguese due to poor defences.

"From when we were first defeated in 1511, the Malays lost faith in themselves, because for the first time they encountered a European race who were more adept and used sophisticated weaponry and warfare tactics."

The subsequent fall of the Malay States by successive conquerors for the next 450 years was because the Malays believed they were no longer capable of defending their own lands.

He outlined the two mistakes committed by the Malays throughout this time, which explained their failure to free themselves from subjugation.

The first was political, whereby the Malays had shown that due to internal squabbling, they were willing to seek the help of foreigners to the extent that they became colonised.

The second mistake was economic. Dr Mahathir said the Malays were too laid-back and not willing to work hard.

When the British opened up rubber plantations and tin mines, the Malays were reluctant to work in these sectors, resulting in the British having to import labour.

He said the immigrant population at one point outnumbered the Malays, and it was the 1929-1935 economic downturn that inadvertently saved the Malays as many of the labourers and workers opted to return to their countries as commodity prices plunged.

"We can blame the British and we can blame other people, but the fact remains that the outsiders came in because we were not willing to work hard.

"We must learn from our history if we are to avoid repeating mistakes and fall into the same old trap."

Dr Mahathir said unity was a pre-requisite for the Malays to remain a free and independent race.

If not for the Malayan Union proposal by the British, which threatened to turn the Malays into second-class citizens, they would not have united, he said

"It was only when the British cooked up the Malayan Union plan were the Malays shocked into realising the possibility that they would end up as a race of drifters without a country to call their own."

Opposition to the Malayan Union united all the Malays into action, resulting in the birth of Umno.

However, he pointed out the dire circumstances that the Malays were now in because they were repeating past mistakes.

"Now it looks as if some of us have forgotten that unity is important, and that we are now willing to be disunited.

"There is no longer the split which was brought about when some ulama left Umno to establish Pas, but it was followed by the establishment of Semangat 46, and subsequently Parti Keadilan Nasional."

Despite the split, Umno had proven that it could survive and thrive, he said.

"But now, even in Umno there are those who have forgotten the importance of unity and their responsibilities."

Dr Mahathir said where the Malays squabbled for positions during their feudal history, "now they are fighting for positions as branch leaders, division head and supreme council member, resorting to whatever means necessary."

Later at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said in Umno's fight against money politics, action would be taken against anyone, including supreme council members or the Prime Minister.

"If the Prime Minister is guilty and there is proof, remove him. I am willing to be removed if I am found to be involved in money politics. Expel me," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno must be serious in this or the people would not have believed in the party.

The party has appointed a body (disciplinary board) responsible for looking into money politics and its views must be given serious consideration.

To a question on whether restrictions in eligibility to contest for party posts had caused the problem to persist, Dr Mahathir said it was simply greed.

"If we are responsible and we fight in the party for the interest of the party, and we protect party interest and not self-interest, we would not do anything for self-interest which could damage the party. That is basic."

