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Malays must decide own fate

THE truth is bitter but better. If the Malays do not change their ways and mindset and strive for excellence, they risk being left behind the other races. Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said this before and he repeated this concern for the community with great emphasis and urgency in his opening speech at the 55th Umno General Assembly.

The Malays must make up their mind to do what is necessary to take on the challenges of joining the Information Technology Age. They have already missed the Industrial Revolution and the Industrial Age mainly because they were colonial subjects and thus not in control of their own destiny. It would be tragic if they were to remain a spectator in the IT Age and this time, they would have no one else to blame but themselves. The Malays must not be complacent but work hard to achieve their goals. They must be patient and accumulate their wealth gradually. Only then will they learn how to preserve their wealth. They should also avoid the habit of making easy money because as the saying goes, "easy come, easy go."

Dr Mahathir is not one to mince his words, and in reminding the Malays that it was partly because of their own disunity that allowed the colonialists to dominate them in the past, he is also cautioning them that if their present disunity is allowed to continue, they will again be dominated by other people. This is not idle rhetoric but a real possibility because modern-day colonialism can exist in many subtle forms and guises camouflaged in the language of free trade, liberalisation and globalisation.

If developing countries are not vigilant, their already fragile economies and currencies can be attacked by currency traders, thus compelling them to seek help from international agencies which impose conditions that force them to open their economies to exploitation by foreigners and subject their domestic politics to outright interference by developed countries. Malaysia has been able to avoid losing its sovereign rights because, under the strong leadership of Dr Mahathir, we dared to be different.

The Umno-led Barisan Nasional Government has provided ample opportunities for the Malays to progress in the key areas that are vital for their integration into the mainstream of the modern economy. Despite some weaknesses and shortcomings, there has been tangible progress in uplifting the economic position of the Malays and other Bumiputeras since the implementation of the New Economic Policy. Unlike in the past, there are now many Malay doctors, engineers, accountants, scientists and other professionals. However, the affirmative policies and special rights for the Malays and other Bumiputeras have to continue because their equity stake in the economy has not reached the targeted 30 per cent and their achievements in other areas are still not satisfactory. Pas and those quick to criticise Umno for its shortcomings should be honest enough to acknowledge that it is Umno which has brought about whatever economic and educational progress that the Malays have achieved since independence.

A re-invigorated Umno cleansed of money politics and corruption remains the best hope for the Malays to continue to progress and be respected. They can hold their heads high in meeting the challenges in a competitive world. It is therefore imperative that the Malays, especially the youth, put their trust in the party.

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