

22/06/2001

Speech a wake-up call for Malays to remain united

Dzulkarnain Taib

"IT'S a timely reminder," said a woman minister and "It's a wake up call," said a businessman. "It's a beautiful and cleverly crafted speech," said a division chief.

The underlying message of Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad's speech at Umno general assembly yesterday was clear - Malays must unite or be subjugated by neo-colonialism in the guise of globalisation.

Party president and Prime Minister Dr Mahathir delivered a fiery reminder to the Malays that their only way to salvation and survival in an increasingly globalised environment is to remain united and firm in their resolve.

Although unity has been an oft-repeated topic in all his years as the leader of Malaysia's largest and dominant political organisation, this year's speech contains a sense of immediate urgency. Unless the Malays buck up and pull up their socks, the slogan that the race will never vanish from the surface of this earth will certainly become a reality.

Tuan Mohd Hassan Tuan Yaacob, the Kubang Kerian Umno division head, said Dr Mahathir has poured all his frustrations, anger, concern, vision and hope in the speech.

"He no longer wants to act as Mister Nice Guy and be diplomatic when talking about the problems facing Umno and the Malays.

"He has given an excellent analysis of the various issues concerning the party and the Malays, and I think the members ought to ponder on what he said seriously this time," he added.

Abdul Hamid Abdul Sattar, an official at Umno headquarters, summed up the party president's speech as the gist of all the speeches he had delivered in the last 19 Umno general assemblies.

"It was a powerful speech and contained all the highlights of his past speeches," Abdul Hamid said.

Dr Mahathir did not mince his words when he said that the Malays have forgotten the pain and sufferings of being a colonised race for 450 years.

"They have forgotten how they were colonised and despised because they were fractionalised and disunited.

"They have forgotten their strength and success, when they were once united and had fought hard against the British and had achieved independence," he lamented.

Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, the Wanita Umno deputy chief and Minister of Women Affairs and Family Development, said only with a firm footing in knowledge and skills will the Malays be able to spearhead a successful future.

"Without these qualities I am afraid that they will be wiped out and diminished," she warned.

A corporate figure, Datuk Mohd Nadzi Mohd Salleh said Dr Mahathir's speech was what the Malays needed most now to regain their confidence.

"The Malays have become complacent and they have failed to learn from history.

"We can become a great nation and we can achieve dreams which are deemed impossible only if we work together as a united front.

The challenges ahead are great, and if we do not prepare ourselves and willing to submit to foreign interest, then we have nobody to blame but ourselves," said Mohd Nadzi, who is also Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd executive chairman.

Dr Mahathir also attacked Malays who will surrender their dignity and sacrifice their Malay brethren just to please their foreign masters and appear progressive and worldly to them.

He lambasted the opposition who used irresponsible means to force the Government to give in to their demands, including overthrowing the democratically-elected Government.

"Their leaders had gone abroad to seek assistance so that the street violence they planned could be implemented.

"They knew that Malaysians were not interested in committing violence even though they were paid. That was why foreigners were needed," he explained.

Ahmad Shabery Chik, who was recently elected as Umno Kemaman's deputy chief, criticised those who cohort with foreigners to destabilise the Government.

He added that such actions will allow the domination of the country by foreign interests.

"These stooges fail to understand that the people will never support such a thing," he said.

In the two-hour-long speech, delegates were glued to their seats as they listened attentively to Dr Mahathir's explanation on the party's struggle and challenges.

As representatives from each state, and that from the Youth and Wanita wings, debated on the president's speech, Umno members realised that what is needed most to secure a win in the 2004 general election is re-energising their spirit and commitment to the party's idealism.

The level of confidence towards the party is back on the rise and it is very important to maintain that momentum with sincerity of deeds and commitments to the cause of the people.

In the end, it was party veteran Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Tapa who succinctly said that history is a good reminder to those who want to benefit from it.

"What we are today is the product of our past," he added.

(END)