

Dr M: Don't be arrogant

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IPOH: Barisan Nasional leaders are reminded not to be arrogant or flaunt their wealth as this could lead to the coalition's defeat in the general election.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said as politicians, they must realise they owed their position to the support of the people and, if they are not careful, they could lose it all in the polls.

"In politics, if we do not know how to please the people, we will not be able to succeed," he said in his speech during a dinner here last night hosted by the Perak Backbenchers Club and Baiduri, a welfare association of the wives of elected representatives.

The dinner was also to mark Dr Mahathir's 21 years as Malaysia's Prime Minister.

The Umno president said he was pleased with the praises for his achievements as Prime Minister but he added: "All the decisions and orders I made could not have been executed unless Umno members, Barisan Nasional leaders and government officers co-operated in carrying them out."

Earlier in Tanjung Malim, Dr Mahathir said that the failure of the recent Asean Ministerial Meeting to reach a consensus on Malaysia's proposal to set up the Asean + 3 secretariat was due to jealousy among member countries; reports SA'ODAH ELIAS.

The Prime Minister said some members were envious of Malaysia and felt uneasy over the proposal.

"Some felt that if the Asean + 3 secretariat is to be set up, it would overshadow the existing Asean secretariat. At the same time, among Asean member countries, there also exists jealousy and feelings of uneasiness.

"However, we will not lose hope but will instead continue to push for the idea," he said at a dialogue with students of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan

Idris here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the proposal was the first step towards realising the idea of setting up the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) made up of countries in the North-East Asia and South-East Asia.

Since almost all of the South-East Asian countries were weak, their voices were never respected in the international forum, he said.

"So we thought that if we can combine forces with China, South Korea and Japan - which

are strong and rich-by setting up EAEG, our voice will be respected," Dr Mahathir said.

Then the international community would have to listen because the countries had a combined market of 1.5 billion people, he added.

Dr Mahathir said if the idea became a reality, it would create a balance in economic and political powers between the Western world and the United States, and countries in Asia.

It could also help prevent weaker countries from being

"colonised" by richer countries, he added.

On Malay privileges, Dr Mahathir said the people would have to decide whether or not to continue to depend on the Government for everything.

"Do we want this help from the Government forever until we become paralysed and unable to face new challenges or do we want to slowly become independent? This is the new Malay dilemma and only they make the decision," he added.