

Malays have to unite to

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THE outlook is more than bright, but it's also **wise to be** anxious, not about the centre but several pockets in the Peninsula. The Diarist feels obliged to warn of the shadow which may fall upon some crucial areas unless the Umno president's exhortations are heeded by its incoming leadership and grassroots.

At Thursday's 54th Umno general assembly, Datuk **Seri** Dr Mahathir Mohamad, while exuding dignity and grace during perhaps his last speech at the assembly, reiterated **his** fears of the ultimate irony that Umno's 48 years of success (1955-2003) may have made it its own worst enemy. The Opposition cannot defeat Umno: only Umno can vanquish **Umno**, as it did in Kelantan and Terengganu.

The tributes to Dr Mahathir by delegates were fond, but **perhaps** a special assembly should be held to give Dr Mahathir a proper farewell, as Umno did for Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra when he handed over the party leadership and premiership to Tun Razak.

Datuk Seri Abdullah **Ahmad** Badawi must ensure the ruling party flourishes even more luxuriantly. One thing that should be done in this regard is to look back and see what can be learned from the reasons for the Malays splitting rather spectacularly. Views will differ. However, if he has the political will, he must contend with the religio-social forces.

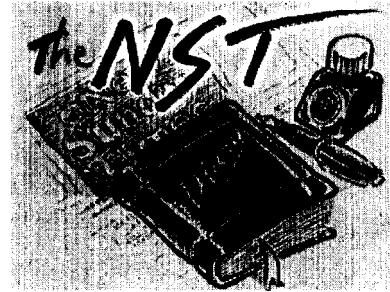
History is a relentless and dynamic master which demands change as an absolute pre-condition of survival.

Abdullah will not only persevere, but also enhance his party's and the Government's remarkable achievements — in his own style and image, of course.

After only 50 years of democracy and 50 years of triumph (at the first local government level), how is it possible the Malays are so divided? Can they not attempt to reduce future threats by arming themselves with skills, knowledge and the correct Asian and Islamic values?

The stakes are more than a victory in the general election. There must be union among the Malays. They must preserve what remains of the unity from further attempts to wreck it.

Malaysia is a plural society. Therefore, there must be a political amalgam of caution, reform and for-



mulas of proven worth. Malaysians must look closely at the important features of Umno and Pas. One defends the status quo, the other wants a theocracy. That is what the two disagree on so violently. Umno promotes moderation, reason and prosperity over religious and cultural obscurantism.

The potential for disunity will increase with globalisation, development and social progress. All this will cause greater divergence between abilities and expectations, between monolingual Malays and bilingual Malays. How far the divide will carry them depends upon the speed, temper and tone in which the Government approaches the solution to problems.

Dr Mahathir has enlarged what was built for the people by his predecessors. The maintenance and security of the edifice of multi-racial rule depends on all moderate Malaysians.

The magnitude of potential dangers will test the determination, resolution, courage and the endurance of the whole nation.

Dr Mahathir, over 22 years, despite the many storms, has made this