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Fighting a new imperialism

MALAYSIA needs a strong Umno, now more than ever. The invasion of Iraq has demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that a new wave of colonisation is afoot, and because there is no viable alternative to Umno, the party's struggle must go on. It is foolish for members of the party to suppose that the fight ended with independence and rapid development. For, as with any independence, the real battle begins only after that end is finally arrived at.

Hence, the Prime Minister's exhortation at Umno's 57th anniversary celebrations at Stadium Merdeka that the party go on with the struggle for independence, with a small but significant difference: the defence and strengthening of that independence. But can the Umno of today continue to carry off this role? Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad appears to have some doubts. If he did not, he would not be pressing so hard for the party to improve itself. He is critical of a membership that puts self-interest before party and country. He chides the members for complacency, short-sightedness and indiscipline.

Umno, as Malaysia's leading political party, must therefore take cognisance of every potential threat to the country and fashion its struggle appropriately. Those wishing to become members must know the party's mission and act accordingly. Instead, there is a tendency for the current crop to focus on their political careers at the expense of the organisation, sometimes even the welfare of the nation. Only a few party veterans now sustain the spirit that informed the struggle born 57 years ago.

Of great significance to this nation as a whole, and the Malays especially, is Dr Mahathir's urgent appeal for a monumental attitudinal change that will unite the population against the very real possibility of re-colonisation. He urges a unity that will bring forth a resilience which will make possible a country strong enough to defend its sovereignty militarily, economically and politically. Although his speech speaks specifically to the Muslims when calling upon them to help themselves first before appealing to God, the same also goes for non-Muslims too.

Malays and non-Malays, Muslims and non-Muslims alike must come to terms with the national leadership that Umno has provided thus far. To even think of a change at this juncture would be to imperil our multiracial and multireligious future.