

'Bumis must have capacity to compete'

Speech by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, deputy president of Umno at the annual general assemblies of Umno Youth and Wanita Umno, and the Puteri Umno convention yesterday.

SINCE the last assemblies, a series of events have come to pass on the nation and the party. On Nov 21, 2001, the nation mourned the passing of Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong. The late Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah was an exemplary Ruler, who, through his reign strengthened the institution of the Constitutional Monarchy and the Malay Sultanate that has been, and will continue to be, championed by Umno. Let us officially record our condolences to the reigning Sultan of Selangor and the Selangor Royal Family.

The nation also lost a prominent nationalist on Nov 29, 2001, with the demise of National Laureate Datuk Usman Awang. Datuk Usman was one of the credible pro-Independence voices.

Through his literary works, he raised critical views but in a manner that was respectful and in accordance with our culture. He propagated issues of justice and humanity and his writings underlined the importance of harmony and peace in a plural society. The late Datuk Usman may no longer be with us but he will continue to live amongst us through his works.

Another prominent son, Tan Sri Melan Abdullah, passed away on the eve of Hari Raya Haji. Tan Sri Melan was a prominent journalist and responsible for the founding of the *Utusan Melayu* newspaper group. It was through his early efforts that this newspaper built the foundation to become the premier Malay newspaper in the country.

It was through *Utusan* that the late Tan Sri Melan supported Umno in its efforts to enhance the stature of the Malays in various fields, including, culture, language, politics, economy and political leadership. He was also in the forefront in promoting patriotism during the *Konfrontasi*.

Umno also lost two prominent veterans — Datuk Mohd Yassin Abdul Rahman, who was a former party secretary-general, on May 1, and on May 13, Datuk Osman Abdullah, who was a former information chief. To the families of all these distinguished person-

coupled with an efficient administration has enabled the country to overcome the trials and tribulations of the global economic recession. Malaysia has continued to achieve positive growth. Although our growth may be lower than in the past, in relative terms, our economic performance has outperformed our neighbours and even surpassed those of developed countries. *Insha Allah*, we will continue to register even higher levels of success in the future.

In the field of education, Malay and Bumiputera students have done us proud by securing greater number of places in public institutions of higher learning, even with the introduction of the meritocracy system. This success is a clear illustration that Malay and Bumiputera students have stood up to the challenge positively and constructively, by being serious and focused on their studies.

Their achievements also demonstrate that the educators have intensified efforts to ensure their students, be it in the classrooms or the lecture halls, perform better. Umno congratulates Malay and Bumiputera students on their accomplishments. Umno wishes to record its appreciation to teachers for their noble and tireless efforts. The excellent results and the commitment of teachers is a source of pride to the Malay community.

The performance of our students and the hard work of educators have erased perceptions that Malays are not able to survive in open competition without quotas. I hope you will intensify efforts to ensure that the Malay and Bumiputera youth will one day be the best amongst the best, the *creme de la creme*.

Education is the key to opening up and changing the mindset of the community. After May 13, Umno set up a special task force (Pasukan Petugas Khas) to conduct a study and execute a programme to bring about a Mental Revolution (Revolusi Mental). Education was identified as a key element in transforming the Malay community to be more competitive in meeting the challenges of our time. The importance of education is even more critical in the globalised era and in facing the challenges of an economy that is augmented by knowledge.



ABDULLAH: 'Meritocracy system should be viewed as one approach towards testing the resilience of the Malays.'

survival, the Malays and Bumiputeras have also to be exposed to the real meaning of competition from an early stage. If they can only compete within a controlled environment, then it means that they are competing in an artificial environment. This artificial environment will prevent our people from understanding what competition means in the real world. Competition in a controlled environment may give them confidence; but this confidence is untested and will last only until they enter the real world.

The Maktab Rendah Sains Mara (MRSM) and Matriculation Centres that have in the past exclusively recruited Malay and Bumiputera students are examples of this artificial environment that does not reflect the reality of the real world. These educational facilities have produced many Malay and Bumiputera alumni; now it is time that competition is enhanced in these institutions. To achieve this, the intake

Bumiputera families are serious and committed, we can achieve greater success in our agenda for Bumiputera education. It is the duty and responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that when we achieve developed nation status in the year 2020, we will have a ready pool of trained Malays who will be prime movers in the work force.

On Sept 11, 2001, the world was shaken by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York. The attacks did not only result in the destruction of a majestic symbol of the world's most powerful nation. The attacks demonstrated how extremism has influenced minds and inspired action. This has resulted in terror of the most evil proportions. The terrorists have justified their actions by saying that they are fighting terrorists. They ask that their evil acts be excused in the supposed quest for justice. Innocent lives mean nothing to them — misery

prefer conflict among Muslims because of disagreements on worldly affairs. It is therefore imperative that the task of uniting Muslims, uniting our hearts, consolidating our efforts and finding common understanding is borne by all Muslims who are true to their religion.

In this regard, I wish to record my appreciation to the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (Abim) and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka for organising the forum on Palestine on 8 May, 2002. This forum succeeded in bringing together the leaders of both Muslim political parties in Malaysia jointly to express their views and opinions on how to help the Palestinian people in their struggle, and also how to assist the Muslim world in these challenging times.

In my opinion, there was unison in the concerns voiced by both leaders on the issue of Palestine. Both leaders demonstrated a commendable spirit of unity and fraternity. The forum was a platform on which we were witness to the purity of civilised and decorous relations among Muslim brothers.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed openly expressed his hope that on the issue of helping Palestine, Muslims must first be united. It would be ironic for us to be calling for universal Muslim solidarity while we are not united among ourselves. We need to find common ground, even if not on many issues, at least on the important issues of Palestine and terrorism. We cannot compromise on terrorism because Allah has forbidden the use of terrorism, especially in our developed world. Instead Allah has asked us for our penitence because Allah's mercy is with those who work towards goodness.

To me, the Prime Minister's speech at the forum was the speech of a far-sighted statesman expressing his hopes for unity among the Muslim ummah beginning with us in Malaysia, and then all over the world. Let us, together, strive for fraternity and unity among Muslims so that we are able to build a nation in which the ummah are united and successful. It would be meaningless for a country to be known as an Islamic country just because the majority of its people are Muslims. What is more important is that the Muslims in that country are able to acquire knowledge and skills, to prosper and succeed, to administer and govern the country well, and to hold steadfast to the teachings of our religion by bringing continued success and development for the ummah. Muslims in Malaysia ought to be thankful because they are able to fulfill their religious obligations and pursue

strengthening of unity among Malaysians of different races. Cultural integration has heightened. Narrow racial sentiments have largely been eliminated. But the nation has undergone severe tremors and our party has suffered major shocks. But our able captain has seen the Malaysian ship through storms and choppy waters. Today, our politics continue to be stable. Our party remains strong. The voting population continues to swell; the media is proliferating and democracy continues to thrive.

Dr Mahathir's handling of the economy is acknowledged today as a success story against the odds of conventional wisdom. The unique formulas and prudent and pragmatic management of the economy have seen continued growth and prosperity for our people. There is abundant supply of food and essential goods; continuing equity in wealth distribution; declining poverty; more diversified economic activity; multiplying investments; an increasing range of manufactured products; expanding international trade; rising exports; a favourable trade balance; low inflation and a stable currency.

Today, Malaysia is no longer a peripheral state. Today, Malaysia is not a passenger in the global community. Today, Malaysia is not a mere follower of events in the global community. Malaysia has its own identity and self-respect. Its voice is heard and respected. Today's Malaysia is not a recipient nation. Today's Malaysia is a nation that can contribute both in material and non-material terms. Today Malaysians need not feel looked down upon or patronised. Today's Malaysian is a confident Malaysian, respected by the rest of the world and able to stand tall with others.

On the international platform, Malaysia is a model of political stability, economic development and racial and religious tolerance. World leaders visit us all the time to learn from us. We are invited to participate in various forums to give our views on current affairs. The Langkawi Dialogue has become an effective forum for South-South nations. Islamic financial institutions are responding positively to the proposed Islamic dinar. Dr Mahathir is seen as an Islamic leader who adopts and innovates realistic policies based on moderation and pragmatism.

These are the successes and benefits that Malaysia has enjoyed as a result of Dr Mahathir's leadership. A tireless statesman who never gives up in the face of adversity and never succumbs to

13, Datuk Osman Abdullah, who was a former information chief. To the families of all these distinguished personalities, we offer our condolences. Their contribution and services towards the race and the country shall forever be etched in the nation's history.

To the late Sultan Salahuddin and those whom I have mentioned who have preceded us, we pray that their souls would be among the righteous. Let us offer the *Al-Fatihah* for them and all that have passed on ahead of us.

Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will grant them succession (to the present rulers) in the land, as He granted it to those before them; and that He will grant them the authority to practice their faith which He has chosen for them (Islam). And He will surely give them in exchange safe passage after the fear in which they lived to one of security and peace (provided) they (believers) worship Me and do not associate anything (in worship) with Me. — *An Nuur: 55*.

Allah s.w.t. has blessed us with success, prosperity, development and progress. Allah bestows the believers with His compassion and generosity. Allah is all-knowing. He has promised joy to those who are patient in the face of adversity and who are grateful for His blessings. Truth will always prevail and falsehood will be exposed.

Let us therefore proclaim our gratitude to Allah s.w.t. Who has blessed us with so much success. In the year past, we have had by-elections in Likas, Indera Kayangan and Ketari. In these by-elections, the Barisan Nasional not only won but also increased its majority. Malay voters are again giving their support to the Barisan Nasional. This healthy sign is a result of unity and co-operation within Umno at all levels and greater understanding with our allies in the Barisan Nasional. To Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri, I record my appreciation for your important contributions to the success of BN.

The Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) that chose to desert the Barisan Nasional on the eve of the 1990 general elections has returned to the BN fold. Let us hope that the inclusion of the PBS in the Barisan Nasional family will reduce politicking amongst political parties in Sabah. Let us hope that the acrimony that prevailed outside BN is left out and not brought into the Barisan family.

The renewed support from the electorate proves that the policies and programmes that we have developed fulfill the needs and aspirations of the *rakyat*.

This restoration in our support also illustrates that policies are being accurately interpreted and implemented by the managers, administrators and the technocrats. We would like to record our highest appreciation to the government machinery and administration, which has endeavoured to effectively implement our policies and programmes.

Policies have been translated into reality because of their responsible efforts. The people have benefited and the country has progressed as a result of these efforts.

An earnest and sincere management

globalised era and in facing the challenges of an economy that is augmented by knowledge.

Malays and Bumiputeras must develop the capacity to compete. We must build our inner and external strengths to ensure we can succeed in competition. We understand the fears the Malays felt when we introduced the meritocracy system. Umno, too, was fearful of the implications of introducing this system. Nevertheless, in the long-term interests of the Malays and the Bumiputeras, we have to outline and implement strategies that will enable them to develop strengths that will allow them to be more competitive and effective even at global level.

Meritocracy must be viewed as an effort to strengthen the Bumiputeras in facing global challenges. In the final analysis, Malays and Bumiputeras must be able to stand alone and run the fast race without crutches.

In the final analysis, they must be able to become a people who are proud of their own capabilities in facing the challenges of globalisation. However, before they arrive at that level, it is Umno's responsibility to ensure that they become competent captains who can sustain in and survive the stormy oceans. That process of capacity building has to be constructed brick by brick, step by step, with diligence, planning, fairness and earnestness.

We have to take the approach of putting in place positive programmes to enhance their capabilities. The emphasis on education needs total involvement of the party, the Government, institutions and the whole Bumiputera and Malay community. The meritocracy system should be viewed as one approach towards testing the resilience of the Malays. The meritocracy system should be viewed as an attempt to build amongst the Malays a culture of courage in the face of competition. The meritocracy system should be interpreted as a formula to inspire our children to reach the greatest heights.

I cannot overly stress that by accepting the meritocracy system, it does not mean that Umno is foregoing the special rights and privileges accorded to the Malays and Bumiputera as provided in the Federal Constitution.

The meritocracy system should never be interpreted to mean that there is an inclination to sacrifice the rights and privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras. We will defend in no uncertain terms the rights and privileges accorded under the Constitution. It has always been one of Umno's main objectives, since its inception, to fight for and defend the rights and privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras. While we accept the implementation of the meritocracy system, the agenda to uphold the interests of the race will never be sidelined. In that respect, I would like to urge those responsible for the implementation of the meritocracy system — managers, administrators or technocrats — not to lose sight nor be clouded in their judgment in safeguarding and defending the rights and privileges of the Malays and Bumiputeras.

But in seeking to raise the competitiveness of our people for long-term

Bumiputera alumni; now it is time that competition is enhanced in these institutions. To achieve this, the intake in MRSM and Matriculation Centres will be increased by 10 per cent to take in non-Bumiputera students. Malay students should view this as an opportunity to enhance their competitiveness and resoluteness so that they are seen as not only being able to succeed when competing amongst their own, but also succeeding among all students regardless of race.

The inclusion of non-Bumiputeras in these institutions will also help achieve our objectives of national integration. Institutions of learning are the best places to foster national integration. The Government decision to open up 10 per cent of places in these institutions to non-Bumiputeras is based on its desire and sincerity in achieving national integration and realising a

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united Malaysian nation. The integration programme is a national programme. It has to be supported by all — whether it is the public or private sector; be it the Malays or non-Malays. National integration can be achieved more speedily through education.

It is based on this belief that we feel the privately run institutes of higher learning (IPTS) should also endeavour to ensure there are no deviations from the objectives of national integration. Our position is that the privately owned colleges should participate positively in ensuring the success of national integration. We would prefer equity in the intake of students of various races at IPTS level to ensure that there is no double dichotomy in our country's educational programme — the public-sector colleges (IPTA) for Malay-Bumiputeras and the IPTS for non-Malays; IPTA for the poor and IPTS for the rich.

I urge the IPTS to be innovative and introduce packages and incentives, which can attract more Bumiputeras to their institutions. The IPTS must portray a more equitable image in the composition of their student population, their teaching force and their supporting staff. We would like to also see the IPTS providing financial packages for both Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera students from poor families to ensure the spirit of democratisation in education thrives within the IPTS.

I appeal to the Malays and Bumiputeras to give greater priority to education. Malay and Bumiputera families must be more diligent and wiser in mapping out educational programmes for their children by planning their finances, identifying strategic courses and giving constant encouragement to their children to achieve greater heights. I believe that if the Malay and

that their evil acts be excused in the supposed quest for justice. Innocent lives mean nothing to them — misery is the only thing that they bring.

The war against terror waged against Afghanistan was waged mercilessly. However, the cruel and comprehensive destruction of Afghanistan will not guarantee a world that is more peaceful and stable.

Afghanistan has been obliterated and its people's lives have not been uplifted. Now we are told that Iraq may be next. Iran has also become a target. How many more countries are going to be put on the target list? How many more countries will be turned into battlefields? Amidst all this, Israel continues to oppress the Palestinian people who have for too long lived under the yoke of tyranny.

The Muslim ummah the world over continues to be a target. Islam and

Muslims are associated with negative connotations — shunned, discriminated against and looked upon with disdain. The Muslim world is painted black. The world is becoming divided into the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Are Muslims unable to determine their own future? Allah is most benevolent and just. The problems that confront the Muslim world must be seen as a lesson from Allah, to awaken the Muslim world so that we are united, and that the bonds of fraternity among us are strengthened. Apart from offering our prayers to Allah, the Muslim *ummah* must unite and work towards redeeming the negative image and perception that currently haunts us.

Allah has bestowed upon the Muslims plenty of bounty and riches on this earth. Are Muslims thankful for this bounty that has been bestowed upon us? Islam enjoins unity. Are Muslims truly united? Does the ummah choose to be united? Allah has bestowed us with reason so that we can think. Islam encourages differences in opinion and allows for disagreements in worldly affairs as long as there is no deviation from the fundamental tenets of our faith. We admit that among Muslims, we have differing thoughts in our common struggle to uplift the *ummah*. However, these differences in views and opinion should not be used as a basis for prolonged hatred and animosity among fellow Muslims.

On fundamental issues, our basic principles are similar. The pillars of religion and faith are the same for us. We profess the same unity of God. We all follow the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The direction of our prayers is the same. Our Holy Book, the Quran, is the same. Muslims are brothers and sisters. However, there are still Muslims who

man. Muslims in Malaysia ought to be thankful because they are able to fulfill their religious obligations and pursue their worldly aims in Malaysia, without having to seek refuge in another country. Worldly success and spiritual preparations can be undertaken peacefully and comfortably in this land. These are the blessings of Allah for which we must be thankful. These are the fruits of our leaders efforts for we should be grateful.

Dr Mahathir was given the mandate to lead Umno from 28th June 1981. As Prime Minister from 16th July 1981, he has guided and managed our nation for 21 years. During his tenure, our nation and our people have gone through a remarkable transformation. Our national landscape — be it physical, social, political or economic — has changed significantly. Our communications and infrastructure networks are on par with world standards. The Petronas Twin Towers stand tall above us. Our new administrative centre in Putrajaya reflects our own cultural and architectural heritage. The Multimedia Super Corridor and Cyberjaya are evidence of our advancement in information technology. The Penang Bridge, the North-South Expressway, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the Bukit Jalil Sports Complex, our F1 racing circuit in Sepang and the KL Tower are all landmarks of a new Malaysia. Modern infrastructure has been brought to all corners of our nation, linking villages to cities, the rural country with urban centres.

The immense physical developments have influenced the social landscape. Lifestyles, careers, expertise, thinking and demands of the *rakyat* have changed accordingly with this process. Statistics show that 45 per cent of our current population or 11 million citizens were born during these 21 years. A percentage of these 11 million Malaysians will vote and determine who should rule this country at the next general election. These 11 million citizens were born not only in a post-Merdeka Malaysia but they have known no Prime Minister other than Dr Mahathir. Colonial rule is alien to them. The pre-NEP era is beyond their comprehension. Having known no other life other than these glory years, they are not in a position to evaluate how far we have come as a people and as a nation in the last 45 years since Independence.

Nevertheless, this is the generation that will determine the shape and face of the future Malaysia. This is the generation that will play an important role in etching the colours on the Malaysian canvas. They are the biggest component in determining and spearheading the direction of the Malaysian nation. This is the generation that should be absorbed into the Umno struggle so that they will appreciate the sacrifices and efforts of leaders who preceded them. This generation must awaken to the fact that sacrifices were made over the past 45 years to create the infrastructure we have today and which they, in turn, must build upon to generate further advancements.

Twenty-one years have passed by so fast. In that period, we have seen a

Dr Mahathir's leadership. A tireless statesman who never gives up in the face of adversity and never succumbs to pressure, Dr Mahathir epitomises the qualities that Malaysians should strive for — courageous, conscientious, meticulous, punctilious and thorough. Service and sacrifice for the nation have become his hallmark and way of life. The young Dr Mahathir cycled from house to house through padi fields and untarred roads to service his patients in the rural outskirts of Alor Star. Today, this same doctor flies from country to country and continent to continent to help solve global problems and conflicts.

That is the Dr Mahathir that I know, the Umno Doctor. A portrait of a statesman with a brilliant mind and a compassionate heart. A visionary and charismatic leader whom we are privileged to have as our own; a leader who has made us believe that *Malaysia Boleh, Kita Boleh*. Let us praise Allah Almighty for having taken one of His servants to become our leader. Let us pray that Dr Mahathir will continue to be given the blessings, strength and health to lead our beloved country and our people to greater heights of achievement.

The preceding five years have been most challenging in ensuring the continued growth of the domestic economy. Many countries face difficulties in managing their economies in the face of the global recession. We are grateful that Malaysia was able to remain competitive without external aid. The economic measures we pursued have brought us success and ensured that our country continues to prosper.

In the last five years, there have been many lessons learnt in managing our national economy prudently and wisely. Umno has provided numerous opportunities to the Malays and Bumiputeras to participate in the national economy. After the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and in the two decades following that, numerous Malay businesses were developed.

However, when the financial crisis occurred in 1997, many of these businesses faced numerous financial and management problems and went through a crisis of confidence. This showed that many institutions and businesses headed by Malays and Bumiputeras are still fragile and do not yet have a sufficiently strong foundation.

The preceding five years should open our eyes and minds to the fact that the strength of Malays in the economic sector is largely limited to making proposals, lobbying for support and using connections to get projects and business opportunities. The Malay culture in business needs proper orientation.

The know-how way of getting business opportunities should instead be substituted with know how to ensure they are able to successfully manage and develop their businesses. Survival and continuity in business depends on the ability to create new opportunities, create new wealth and create new jobs. Being mere commission agents will not create new oppor-

'We put our hopes in the new wave'

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tunities nor result in creating new wealth.

The Malays have to be more proficient in investing, and managing funds and cash flows. They should not pursue fleeting wealth or luxuries. They should not be so inclined to posturing and pomposity. The disproportionate inclination towards material wealth and luxuries has shifted the focus of the Malays from managing their business, so much so that initial returns received are used to fund lifestyles rather than being reinvested back into the business or giving dividends to shareholders. In the end, the seed capital is wiped out and the debts pile up.

The value systems of the leading Malay businessmen will determine the shape and future of Malay businesses. Managing a business is a trust on behalf of investors and creditors who have loaned these businesses the money. Criminal breach of trust at one level will trigger a chain reaction that will harm everyone involved.

When the financial crisis struck, the scarcity of capital and funds led to the collapse of many Malay businessmen. Following that, some resorted to fraud and a complete lack of transparency in managing their business.

This not only destroyed and unravelled Malay business institutions but also created a crisis of confidence in the country. Where was their sense of responsibility? Where was their accountability? What happened to their values? Where did their self-respect go? Where was their credibility and where was their integrity? The corporations lost money and the investors suffered. Many people suffered; many lost jobs; suppliers lost their livelihood; creditors remained unpaid; investors were betrayed. Virtually nothing was left.

The Government intervened to save some of these institutions to ensure that innocent investors and the work force were protected. The Government intervention was to ensure that institutions, which were developed to safeguard Bumiputera interests, were rescued to ensure equity in wealth distribution as proscribed under the NEP. I must stress here that government intervention was intended to

safeguard institutional, Bumiputera and national interests. Never at any time was it our intention to protect or save any individual.

The Government's firm handling of such issues was apt and should be supported by all Umno members to ensure investor confidence returns. Such tough action was necessary even if it affected Umno members themselves. To correct mistakes, we need to be tough. We cannot afford to be selective or exempt anyone from prosecution. Those who cheat, flout regulations and deviate from the norm cannot and must not escape from being accountable to the nation and the people.

These tough actions to make those responsible accountable for their actions has resulted in recovery in the system. A new wave of young, professional Bumiputera corporate figures are being given the trust to rescue and save Bumiputera institutions and businesses. I am grateful that their sincerity, honesty and commitment has saved debt-laden Bumiputera institutions. The country once again gives its trust to a young and skilled professional class. The nation hopes that their idealism can be translated into reality. We pray that they take heed from the mistakes and lessons of the past. Let us pray that the misdeeds of the past do not recur yet another time. We pray that these new people will carry out their duties with honesty, trustworthiness, and sincerity and with transparency. It takes a long time to build up a name, to build up trust, confidence and success. Do not betray the people again because you are tempted by greed. Let's hope that you will not try to be a Mat Jenin, dreaming to buy a ship before you have even collected on the sale of your coconuts.

In the implementation of the NEP, many economic opportunities depended on political power. But I want to remind Bumiputera businessmen that in business, dependence on political power cannot get you very far. The world of business demands that you build up your competitiveness and cost-effectiveness at every level so that you can penetrate the global markets. Further, the tendency for connected Malays to grab opportunities in which they did not have know-how also deprived Malays with skills the chance of seizing those same opportunities. Malays have to be sincere and honest in ensuring that their involvement in business has to be based on their having the skills to succeed in that business. They cannot

expect business opportunities to be given to them merely because they are Malays.

Malay and Bumiputera businessmen who have proven their capabilities should be given full support. Young Malays who dare to leave stable government jobs or well paying private sector jobs to venture into business must be encouraged. These young entrepreneurs should be given opportunities to provide services and venture into businesses that are dominated by the big firms and multinationals. These businessmen who have proven themselves must be helped by ensuring that their work is not made tougher by bureaucratic delays, late work certification and late payments, be it from banks, private sector companies or government agencies themselves. The public sector, which is staffed mainly by Malays,

Do not mistake flowing robes for religious knowledge. Do not mistake domes for mosques... hold to the truth. Support what is true. Abandon what is false.

must ensure that they assist in ensuring the success of these Bumiputera businessmen.

Financial institutions, suppliers, distributors and customers should not shy away from helping Malay businessmen. There are still many honest Malays who carry out honest businesses. There are many Malays who are capable of becoming genuine industrialists and businessmen. They should not be sentenced because of crimes and misdeeds committed by others before them. If the business community sentences them for the misdeed of others, it would mean we are killing the foetus before it has been allowed to develop. The new Malay businesses must be given the opportunities to succeed.

We will continue to pursue our objective of creating a Bumiputera industrial and commercial community. The difference is in the approach and strategy. Therefore, agencies and financial institutions should not get the wrong impression that our efforts in this direction have stopped. Do not make your own interpretations and practice a closed-door policy against Malay businesses. As long as Umno is

given the trust and mandate by Malays, we will not budge from our objective of creating a quantitative and qualitative Bumiputera industrial and commercial community.

We have the political strength. Political strength has given us power. This power provides us the opportunity to create a Bumiputera industrial and commercial community. The Malays should be wise in using this opportunity. They should have already acquired the skills and capabilities to spot opportunities, create jobs and make use of the skilled labour force amongst Malay graduates. Political power should not be used to help Malays who have been given opportunities yet failed time and again. Helping that fraction of people who continue to fail deprives more capable Bumiputeras of opportunities.

There are still many Malays who need

to be given the opportunity. There are many Malays who are qualified. There are many Malays who can compete. The Malays will continue to get stronger if we assist those amongst them who are courageous and willing to compete. The Malays will only weaken if despite the subsidies we give them, they do not hone their skills to compete without crutches. Malay political eminence will be eventually lost if Malays do not become more competitive, improve expertise and skills in various fields and step up technological proficiency. Therefore, we must use the political power we have to ensure that the Malays learn to fish in the deep seas and not depend solely on being given the fish to eat all the time. The time has come for us to use our political power more judiciously to ensure that we succeed today so that the future generations of Malays do not look down on us.

Let us be thankful for Umno's achievements in the past 12 months. Let us also be thankful for Umno's success since it was formed in 1946. We must extend this success in years to come so that more people can be thankful for the blessings that we have inherited. To achieve this, we must

strengthen our party even more. Through work programmes aimed at enhancing unity, our party will become stronger. We must try to avoid conflicts among members. If these conflicts are allowed to fester, it will eventually take a long time and waste a lot of effort in finding an amicable solution to the situation.

In our efforts to unite our party, party leaders, first, must be united. Party members will be more united if there were leadership by example. Supporters will be less inclined to work against others if their leader does not provide encouragement to do so. It is not unknown in Umno that the party presents a facade of strength, while internally it is racked by strife and divisions. Internal conflicts are the result of those who seek power above all else. In this quest for power, the influence of kingmakers and power brokers are enhanced. The quest for political power suddenly becomes personally profitable for these people. Leaders are treated like commodities, priced commercially to bargain with and to sell. With this, political corruption rears its ugly head and with it the loss of reason, the marginalisation of the party's interests and the destruction of our community's struggle. Our party's constitution allows for the democratic selection of leaders. These democratic contests, if conducted in a clean and fair manner — without resorting to bribery, to slander, and to threats — will not weaken the party but strengthen it. We must be cognisant that there is no use in gaining power and position within the party if we lose in the general elections and Umno loses political power.

Our focus must be on strengthening the party and uniting our members. Our common enemy should be the opposition. We must place realistic targets on what we can achieve in Kelantan and Terengganu. The wistful and dejected tone of the speaker for Terengganu at last year's assembly should serve as an important reminder for us to avoid any further losses for Umno. I hope Malays will not forget easily.

Umno members must work hard and mobilise so that they do not become Malays that forget easily.

Let us resolve to remove any animosity among ourselves. Let us commit to building a common platform for all of us. Among the Pemuda, there should not be a Hishammuddin camp and a non-Hishammuddin camp. In Wanita, there should not be a Rafidah camp and

a non-Rafidah camp. In Puteri, there should not be an Azalina camp and a non-Azalina camp. We are all under the leadership of one leader, one president. Our loyalty and services are only for Umno under the leadership of Dr Mahathir.

Strengthening Umno depends on a genuine co-operation among its members. A network of good relationships among party leaders and party members is an important ingredient for our party's success. Learn and strive to be party members that are loyal to your leaders, just as you will one day be leaders that are committed to the party and to our struggle. Loyally serve and work for our party and fellow members. Learn from your struggles just as you learn from a teacher. He who does not know how to follow will not know how to lead.

Our religion, our community and our nation needs a young generation that has solid grounding in religion, open minds, creativity, courage, respect for elders, appreciation for our culture, and the ability to face global challenges and build international networks. So many challenges, trials and tribulations, attractions and opportunities await you. Moral fortitude, spiritual enrichment and the acquisition of knowledge will strengthen you and help you control your desires. The ability to fight off your desires and the success in building inner strength will make you strong and courageous leaders. Political power that is not grounded in our religious obligations will lead to transgressions that will result in power being sought for power's sake, and power used for more power.

Pemuda, Wanita and Puteri have an important role in attracting the younger generation who will inherit the struggles of this party. To tomorrow's generation — become brilliant individuals ever ready to achieve greater successes and to bring our country to greater heights. To you we will leave the task of continuing to uphold the greatness of Islam.

Fill the hearts of all Umno members with faith so that they become genuine Malays who are penitent and knowledgeable. Genuine Malays are more concerned with substance and not form. Do not mistake flowing robes for religious knowledge. Do not mistake domes for mosques. Genuine Malays hold to the truth. Support what is true. Abandon what is false. Preserve what is good; purify what is bad.