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if you do well or not. I must admit that I wasn't very successful. But a few of them have acquired new values, new ways of thinking. We do see quite a number of Malay professionals and Malay businessmen who do well. But the rest are not doing so well.

This can be corrected if you can change their mindset.

**OKB: You just need to go to the next stage... But do you then think that things are going backwards? I suppose you do.**

**MM:** Now, the focus is not on changing the culture. The focus is now on... well, giving [people] things without their earning those things. That's bad.

**OKB: But people generally don't like to change, or don't like to be told to change.**

**MM:** Yes, but we change all the time.

**OKB: We do.**

**MM:** Whether we like it or not, we change. If you lived in a kampung and you move into a town, and you still want to live like you did in the kampung, that's not possible. In fact, we had a problem housing people in places like Kampung Abdullah Hukum and Kampung Kerinchi in KL. They wanted to have a house like they used to, elevated so they can rear chickens underneath, plant some vegetables around the house.

That is not possible in town. In town, you have to have high-rise buildings, you have to live in flats. And living in flats means there are adjustments to be made. You cannot grow vegetables, you cannot rear any chickens. If you don't make these adjustments, you can't really live in an urban area.

**OKB: One amazing aspect of your life is that you have fought from within Umno and you have fought from outside Umno. And by Umno, I am connoting mainstream politics in Malaysia, really. That has left many people confused, even pundits. It must at times get rather confusing even for you.**

**MM:** Well, when you form a political party, you have an objective. What are you struggling for? When you are running Umno and you forget your objective, and you veer away and you go for other things, then I don't see any reason why I should be inside the party. Umno is [supposed to be] dedicated to developing Malaysia, to ensure that people enjoy a good life, that everybody



has a share of the wealth and power in this country.

But then you find that some leaders do not focus on that. They focus instead on something to make themselves happy. For example, they think that the best thing to do is to give money to people, and in that way, become popular. These are not to be found in the objectives of founding Umno.

That's why sometimes I am in, and sometimes I am out [of Umno].

**OKB: Two Malaysian Prime Ministers ruled for a substantial period of time, and were very influential. These are you and Tunku Abdul Rahman. What is your appraisal of Tunku Abdul Rahman today?**

**MM:** The Tunku contributed a lot to the country. He was the one who won independence for the country. He was also the one who solved a very difficult problem – the problem of multiracialism. Normally, in a multiracial country, there will be conflicts for different reasons. Such countries will not be stable and you cannot develop such countries. But Tunku found a way out for Malaysia. He decided that they should share this country, all these races. He came up with this idea of a coalition – not a single multiracial party because a single multiracial party doesn't work. Some have tried to have a party with multiracial membership but that didn't work because people were still not familiar with each other.

So he came up with this idea of a coalition. You remain as you are in your own party

looking after your community, and yet you have a common objective [with the other communities], you see? And when wealth is created, then all will have a share. Even the power. You must share the power, you must share the wealth.

So this was put into the Constitution.

**OKB: I see your aides are telling us that we have to stop talking now. Let me squeeze in one last question. You are from Alor Setar, not very far away from Penang. Can you share some thoughts about Penang, your reminiscences of the place perhaps?**

**MM:** My father came from Penang. In those days, when you wanted to go someplace different, you went to Penang. Penang was a developed town. But Penang has not changed that much. Some parts are very modern. The quay and all that, they are all still the same – ramshackle buildings and all that, and not very tidy, I must say.

One part has changed, the other has remained as it was before independence. But I think this is a problem with democracy. When you want to do something that is good all round, there will be people who will object. And well, you don't want to be unpopular, so you allow these things to go on.

I think they did a better job in KL. If you go to KL, you don't see those ramshackle zinc sheds anymore.

**OKB: Thank you for your time and for sharing. ■**