

Dr M: Malays may look for new 'champion' if Umno fails to clean up its act
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By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, June 4 — Umno won Election 2013 by default of being a Malay party but its people may start hunting for a new "champion" to defend their race, religion and country if the leadership persists in looking after their own vested interests, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned today.

In a blog post headlined "Umno dahulu dan sekarang (Umno then and now)", the former Umno president remarked that the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition's narrow win in the 13th general election (GE13) could not be credited to increased Malay support but was due to the Malays' fear of losing their rights and special position should Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim take federal power with his majority-Chinese partner, the DAP.

"As bad as Umno is, it still smells Malay, is still more likely to protect the interests of the Malays. Therefore there's no choice for Malays besides supporting Umno.

"However, in GE14, Umno cannot hope that this situation will remain. If Umno does not cleanse itself of corruption and self-interests, the Malays may look for another champion," Dr Mahathir wrote in his chedet.cc blog.

The 87-year-old, who still wields considerable clout in the BN lynchpin, reminded its leadership that the party was founded in 1946 on protecting the Malay race, Islam as its religion and the country from colonisation by foreign powers.

These were the common causes that drew the Malays from separate states and the different Rulers then to fight together, he said and urged them to return to Umno's roots.

He said Umno leaders then had fought with their people in mind, not their own self-preservation or interests, and as such had earned the respect of the Malays, many of whom entered the party and took on an active role regardless of their level of education or social rank.

But, Dr Mahathir said, the party now was different and many Malays were "disgusted with Umno" which had shown itself to be interested only in jockeying for high positions and to enrich their own pockets, and therefore rejected the party which they regarded as no longer representative of their well-being.

He also accused Umno leaders at the branch level of blocking the entry of Malays more talented than themselves into the party, fearing their positions would be taken away, which would cause the pool of qualified leaders to shrink at the party level, as well as in the choice of electoral candidates.

Such moves, he said, would eventually lead to a weakened leadership in the government.

"The longer it is, the fewer talented Umno leaders there are. The longer it is, the fewer members who are talented and qualified to be candidates in GE. Talented parachute candidates will be defeated. With that, the government leadership will also be composed of those that are not capable," said the man who had served as Malaysia's fourth prime minister for 22 years.

If Umno's top leadership continued to turn a blind eye to such complaints from the grassroots and failed to reform itself, the party may be relegated to becoming little more than a "fairy tale" in the country's history, Dr Mahathir said.

"This is the future that awaits Umno. This is the future of a party that was excellent but has lost its shine. This is the future for those that don't want to wake up and don't want to correct themselves," he forecast ahead of party elections that must be held by year end.

Under Datuk Seri Najib Razak's leadership, Umno won a total of 88 seats of the 133 the 13-party BN coalition won in the 222-member Dewan Rakyat, and 240 of the 275 states seats in the recent general election.

However, the number fell short of the 145 federal seats his war room strategists had predicted BN would win in the May 5 polls, and which political observers have said may lead some senior Umno leaders to challenge Najib for the position of party president.

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