

Ghani: Bangsa Malaysia is rojak and not acceptable

NST- 6/11/2006

■ By Ravi Nambiar and Siti Nurbaiah Nadzmi
news@nst.com.my

JOHOR BARU: Johor Umno has warned of the dire consequences of advocating a Bangsa Malaysia, saying this was going beyond the legal powers of the Constitution and could unsettle political stability.

Delivering his policy speech at the party convention here, Johor Umno chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the concept was not acceptable because it meant a *rojak* (mishmash) of races in the country.

As the Constitution clearly defined the races as Malay and others, there was no justification for demands for a united and single Bangsa Malaysia or a Malaysian race.

Various groups, in making the call recently, had said a Bangsa Malaysia would go a long way towards strengthening national unity by respecting the similarities and differences of each other.

One of them was Gerakan, which at its national delegates conference in Kuala Lumpur on Sept 4 adopted a resolution urging Malaysians to promote the creation of a progressive Bangsa Malaysia under Vision 2020.

Umno Johor, however, is dead against the idea.

"After 49 years of independence, we should be more mature and not try to produce nebulous concepts whose origins are not clear," said Ghani.

The concept is seen as a threat to the Malays and the special position provided for them in the Constitution.

"The concept, if subjected to abuse, can threaten national stability," he warned.

Ghani said there was no need to reinvent a national identity when the Constitution had clearly defined the vari-

ous races that make up the citizens of this country.

"Even if the term Bangsa Malaysia is to be used, it must only be applied in the context of all the peoples of Malaysia with the Malays as the pivotal race," he said.

A total of 350 party delegates from 26 divisions are attending the two-day conference at Johor Baru's latest convention centre, Persada.

Johor Umno, with nearly 500,000 members spread over 2,032 branches, is the biggest of all the state units.

The state, which is also the birthplace of Umno, has traditionally been the bastion of the party's political strength in the country.

Ghani also revisited the government's meritocracy system, which dominated deliberations at last year's Johor Umno convention.

He reiterated that in the ab-

sence of equal opportunities for education for both rural and urban Malays, it was impossible to strive for meritocracy.

The system was a form of discrimination and oppression, he said. It did not provide for a level playing field but instead deprived thousands of Malay children in the rural areas, who still lacked access to quality education.

"Umno Johor is steadfast in its stand that the meritocracy system must be stopped.

"It is not suitable for implementation," he declared.

Another bone of contention was the introduction of English for the teaching of science and mathematics in schools.

This approach, he said, had only widened the divide between urban and rural schools.

"How can Malay pupils

“
Even if the term Bangsa Malaysia is to be used, it must only be applied in the context of all the peoples of Malaysia with the Malays as the pivotal race.
”

Johor Umno chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman

“
“Refrain from finger-pointing, hurling accusations or openly admonishing others just because you think they are wrong.
”

“In fact, this is the worst way to teach English.
”

“If the objective is to improve English proficiency, why not focus efforts on the teaching of the language?
”

“That would be more practical as well as cost effective,” he said.

Ghani said Bahasa Melayu was also in danger of losing its edge as the language of knowledge in schools because of the priority that was being given to English.

“With the increasing use of Mandarin in the private sector, Bahasa Melayu might also be relegated to the third spot after English and Mandarin in the world of commerce,” he said.

On the Malay Agenda, Ghani called for renewed efforts to boost the status and position of the Malays in all spheres of economic and structural de-

velopment.

He urged the rank and file to reflect on the party's early struggle as many had lost track of its original goals in their pursuit of progress and prosperity.

He stressed the need for Umno to remain united and strong or else the Malays would have no refuge against the onslaught of globalisation and liberalisation.

He urged members to focus on these challenges, saying it was time Umno re-evaluated itself, rebuilt its internal mechanism, and reinforced Malay values and ethics.

To emerge stronger, Umno must overcome both the internal and external challenges. He said there was also a need to instil a strong culture within Umno, one based on trust, impartiality, forthrightness, and godliness.

He said Umno as a Malay party must reflect Malay characteristics and uphold pure Malay values.

“Refrain from finger-pointing, hurling accusations or openly admonishing others just because you think they are wrong.
”

“If something is indeed wrong, we can give our views, comments or even criticisms.
”

“But be careful with your manners and do not be uncouth and discourteous.
”

“And make your views known through the proper channels.
”

“This is the Malay way of doing things.
”

“Let us not discard our rich culture and values when dealing with the present-day crisis in the party,” he said, without saying what the crisis was.

Ghani stressed that Umno had to demonstrate clear intentions which were free of corruption and deceit, saying only then would it be able to regain the awe and respect of the Malays.