

# Rift puts party's fate on the line

## Dr M wants corrupt leaders removed



ROS LI ZAKARIA

CLOSE ranks. That's the message Terengganu Umno division leaders have for members after the divisional polls.

Leaders are worried that the state Umno remains divided over the appointment of Kijal state assemblyman Datuk Ahmad Said as menteri besar following the general election.

They hope that the divisional elections will put an end to the months of politicking, much to the glee of their real political enemies — Pas and, to a lesser extent, Parti Keadilan Rakyat.

"For the past nine months, the political play among Umno members was more intense than efforts to ward off the threat from the opposition. This was reflected in the contest for the top post in five of the eight divisions.

"The people are watching because they gave their mandate to a party which they hoped would look after the interest of the masses and not of their (Umno) members.

"Since the last general election, they have seen little proof that their welfare is being looked into," said a political observer.

Preoccupation with Umno politics has left Ahmad with

too little time to carry out social and economic programmes for the people.

"It is frustrating and annoying. We know the Malays as a people who respect leaders and support fair administration. This is not the case any more as we have become a people who blatantly ignore the sanctity of unity and harmony," said Ahmad.

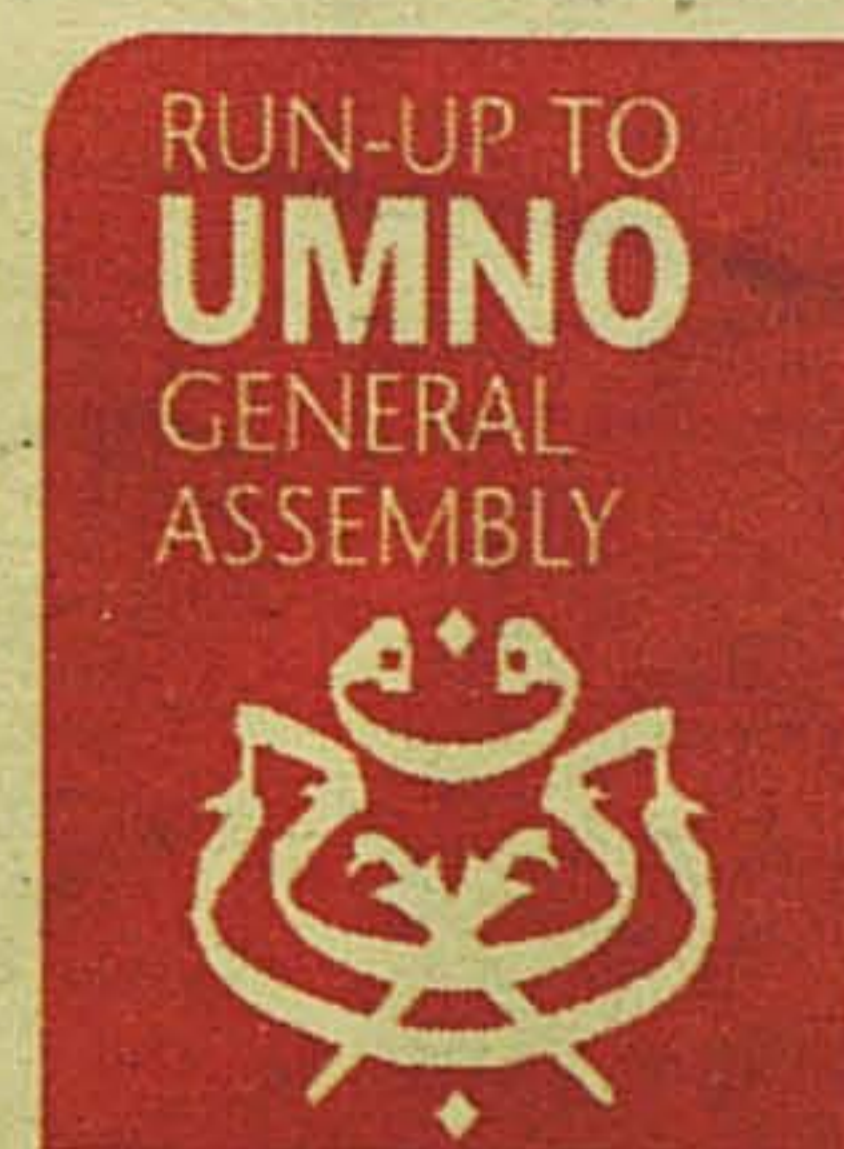
"The political circumstances have made my job a lot harder. I have to put the house in order, politically and administratively."

Ahmad warned that if the bickering continued, the people would suffer and Umno would feel the effects when the 13th general election came round.

"This is my biggest concern now. If all Umno members are aware of this threat, we will not squabble for positions but, instead, work to find the right combination to tackle the problems that will also affect their future if BN loses in the next general election.

"Now that the divisional elections are over, we need to focus on winning the 13th general election. The contestants have to accept that there will be winners and losers in any contest," he said.

Of the eight divisions in Terengganu, Kemaman, Kuala Terengganu and Besut returned their leaders without a contest. Kuala Nerus saw a three-cornered fight for the



top post, while the other divisions saw straight fights.

All the winners spoke about forgetting and forgiving the things said in the heat of contest.

However, Ahmad and all the other divisional chiefs are worried that supporters of the defeated challengers may not be ready to give them their full support.

They fear that these supporters will take their revenge against the elected divisional chiefs in the next general election by working against the party.

"It has happened before and it can happen again. Protest votes are a curse for Umno and the BN, and the protestors do not care if BN loses as long as they get their revenge. So you see, Umno elections are more important than the general election," said Mohamed Abu Bakar, an Umno veteran.

Other Umno veterans share Mohamed's worry.

"These are not men and women of Umno who fight with their heart and soul for

" We know the Malays as a people who respect leaders and support fair administration. This is not the case any more as we have become a people who blatantly ignore the sanctity of unity and harmony.

Datuk Ahmad Said Terengganu Menteri Besar



the party. These are traitors, not only to the party but also to the people.

"Haven't they tasted the pain and misery of defeat in the 1999 general election and how the people suffered under Pas rule?" said a former state assemblyman who wanted to remain anonymous.

Already, coffeshop talk is rife that the days of BN rule in Terengganu are numbered, with the people comparing the unity in Umno and Pas.

"The people have alternatives. If Umno ignores the signals and continues squabbling, I fear the worst for the party in Terengganu," said the former state assembly-

man.

Unless Umno members in Terengganu accept his leadership and that of the newly elected division chiefs, and focus on helping him to steer the BN to victory, Umno's fate is sealed because the comeback road after the 13th general election will be a lost cause.

"We only have to look at Kelantan Umno. It is in disarray because of internal bickering and power struggles. They are attracting the people's attention for the wrong reason," said Mohamed.

"It is now up to Umno members whether they want to end up winners or losers in the next general election."

# More widespread logging

KUALA LUMPUR: The critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros and endangered Malayan tiger face an even more uncertain future as a massive chunk of their habitat in Terengganu forests, roughly the size of 7,000 football fields, is being chopped down.

About 6,130ha in the Tembat and Petuang forest reserves in the state are being logged to make way for the Puh and Tembat dams.

A Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIA), released recently, shows that the state government is proposing to log the adjacent forests, an area double the size of the forest reserves.

The ongoing and proposed logging threatens rare wildlife and risks polluting the river.

The Tembat and Petuang forests reserves act as water catchment areas for Tasik Kenyir.

In a statement yesterday, the World Wildlife Fund Malaysia claimed that satellite

images in the DEIA indicated that felling of the reservoir area and adjacent hills started three years ago.

The DEIA stated that the catchment sites had changed by 20 to 30 per cent between 2005 and 2006 and that new logging tracks were visible.

"Evidence on the ground also suggests that logging and clearing of the reservoir area has already started prior to the approval of the DEIA.

"There seems to be little regard for relevant laws and the DEIA process," said WWF-Malaysia CEO Datuk Dr Dionysius Sharma.

The DEIA also stated that 30 per cent of the existing elephant population within the project area will be forced into nearby plantations, creating more human-elephant conflict.

"Conflict is already occurring near the Tembat Forest Reserve, with cases reported in Hulu Setiu and Hulu Nerus.

"This will result in loss of

revenue to plantation owners and property damages. In the long run, the government will incur higher cost for human-wildlife conflict management."

Sharma also expressed his concern over the anticipated high erosion rate due to logging activity in the catchment areas.

"The kelah fish population found in rivers there will undeniably decrease. Kelah has high conservation and commercial values," he said, adding that eco-tourism activities would also be affected.

This, Sharma said, was also confirmed by the DEIA report which stated that ecotourism activities in Sungai Tembat and Sungai Terengganu Mati would be affected as high soil erosion and sedimentation affects fish biodiversity and spawning grounds.

"Increased siltation from logging could reduce the dam lifetime in the long run even if logging was only carried out during the construction stage



The critically endangered Sumatran rhinoceros may soon lose what's left of its habitat in Terengganu's forests.

of the dam.

"Forests take many years to regenerate and fully resume their water catchment ecosystem and soil protection functions," he said.

"The Federal Government has recognised this and that is why the National Forestry Council had directed all state

governments to gazette catchment forests as water catchment forests in 2005."

The Terengganu state government has gazetted about 49,107ha of forests as catchment forests. The Petuang and Tembat Forest Reserves, however, are yet to be gazetted as catchment forests.

PUTRAJAYA: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad charged yesterday that money politics may have found its way into the race for the Umno deputy presidency.

"I think there is some kanky-panky going on. When someone with a bad history still enjoys a lot of support, I think that the bad history has something to do with his support," he said, without referring to anyone.

"When a candidate, who started very slow with his nominations during the start of the divisional meetings, suddenly shot up from very far behind to qualify in the last remaining days... I want to know why."

Dr Mahathir did not mince his words when reiterating that money politics would soon be the undoing of Umno.

"All the corrupt leaders must be removed completely.

"Umno must be cleaned up. If not, I can assure you that they will lose completely in the next general election.

"Who wants to elect somebody who bought his way up there?"

He said this after delivering his keynote address at the Eighth Perdana Discourse Series on Bangsa Malaysia at the Perdana Leadership Foundation here.

"Throw the corrupt leaders in jail. Maybe the Internal Security Act can be used against them and not against someone who wrote nonsense on the Internet," he said in jest.

However, Dr Mahathir was quick to defend the quota system for party nominations implemented in 1996, which many have claimed had brought in money politics and bribery.

"When I changed it, I thought it would be difficult to bribe all the divisions. But as we can see now, when we're dealing with corrupt people, they will find ways of getting the nominations."

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not ready for non race-based politics. He said the various races were still not united and multiracial parties just did not work.

"The different races still want to send their children to different schools. How to disregard race like that?"