

SPEECH BY
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We offer our gratitude to Allah SWT for his blessings in enabling us to meet here today at the joint opening of the Umno Youth and Wanita assemblies. We pray that Allah SWT will guide and bless this assembly. We pray that our discussions and thoughts will give us insights which will assist us in planning and furthering our objectives in spreading the teachings of Islam; in safeguarding our sovereignty; in furthering the cause of our race; and in strengthening unity of the ummah in this beloved land of ours.

I would like to welcome all delegates to the annual general assemblies of Umno Youth and Wanita Umno. You went through a lengthy democratic process to be chosen to represent your members. They have entrusted you to present their views and to champion their cause and I hope that all of you value this trust. I also take this opportunity to welcome members of Puteri Umno who are attending the assembly for the first time as a new entity in the larger Umno family.

Before we proceed, let us spare a moment to offer our condolences and deepest sympathies to the families of our members who have passed on, in particular, to the family of Yang Amat Berbahagia Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah binti Mohd Ali and her family on the death of Tan Sri Dato Ahmad Razali bin Mohd Ali on May 16. Our condolences, too, for the family of the late Dato' Hormat Rafie who passed away on May 30. In memory of their sacrifices for the party and country, and in memory of all our leaders and members who have passed on, let us join in prayer to Allah SWT that he bestows his blessings upon them and may their souls rest among the faithful. Let us together join in reciting the al- Fatihah and pray that Allah SWT accepts our recitation and dispenses the merits we derive to the souls of our parents, our ulamaks, our teachers, our founders and all our supporters and Muslim brothers and sisters who have departed. Al-Fatihah.

Umno has just marked its 55th anniversary. Today, we have 2.9 million Malays and bumiputeras registered as Umno members. These are large numbers.

Ordinarily, such a large membership would be a formidable and unbeatable force if it could be effectively galvanised to touch the hearts and minds of our people.

But, alas, the euphoria of celebrating our 55th anniversary was overcast and rendered all but inconspicuous because the majority of our members were indulged in their own private battles for power and position in the divisional elections. They focused their resources, energy, brainpower and concentration on fighting each other. They diverted themselves from the larger and more imperative agenda of serving our religion, the Malay race and the country. Instead, they were so immersed in fighting and campaigning for divisional posts that their vision became blurred and their struggle became petty.

Almost a year ago, I stood before you at this same forum and I reminded you of the erosion in our support in the 1999 general election. I reminded you not to be so absorbed in bickering and in fighting, lest you miss the forest for the trees. I

reminded you that our minds and hearts had to be focused on making an Umno-led victory our main agenda; that our success and continued existence would depend on us regaining the confidence of the people by projecting an exemplary leadership and through sincerity in championing the cause of the Malay race; that our success would depend on our commitment to meeting the needs of the majority rather than pursuing personal and factional interests.

We were beaten down and lost power in Terengganu and we failed to wrest control of Kelantan, yet again. Power, once lost, is so arduous to regain. I reminded delegates that the voting patterns, in particular amongst our Malay supporters, should serve as a warning alarm to jolt us from the slumber of having been serenaded by the sweet lullabies of prolonged years of victory. Since the last assembly a year ago, we have faced two by-elections, one in the Teluk Kemang parliamentary constituency and the other, in the Lunas state constituency in Kedah. We won by a much-reduced majority in Teluk Kemang. In Lunas, we lost.

All of this should have been lesson enough for us, and should have shocked us into the realisation that it was imperative for us to redeem Umno's image; to make it, once again, a strong and formidable political party; to toil towards making it once again respected and feared; to endeavour to regain the trust, confidence and support of the majority of the people.

Yet, the conduct of members during the divisional elections shows that they have not taken seriously the lessons thrust on us. Some of the incidents during the divisional campaigns shamed us and only served to show that members did not heed the reminders and advice of the party president and senior party leaders. Our advice and warnings were brushed off like water running off a duck's back. Our attempts at preventive action proved ineffective and we were forced to set up a Disciplinary Board to act against the reprobates amongst us.

At a time when the party's Supreme Council and Management Committee should be focused on the principal agenda of race, religion and country, we were instead forced to divert precious time and energy to discuss misconduct at the branch and divisional levels. Should our affairs be allowed to continue thus, then, sadly, it can only be at the expense of Umno and the Malays.

Today, there is this belief amongst our members that winning divisional elections guarantees fortune. It is a belief we must eliminate. It is time now for us to separate politics from business. If we do not take an uncompromising position on this and if we are not stern and stringent in our actions now, then, I fear, Umno's influence will erode further until our party will be so weakened that we will lose sight of our vision and struggle for the Malays. If that happens, the nation's future can only be bleak.

Our large membership will be meaningless if Umno becomes a grouping of different factions, each with its own warlord, each with its own fiefdom, each with its own narrow agenda. Just for a moment, let us imagine how formidable Umno would be if all the resources, energy, time, and the deliberation and ingenuity put into devising tactics to win posts were instead utilised in fighting our real enemies. I believe that if we were to put this energy in confronting our opponents, there will be no political party in this country that can compete with, or challenge us.

After having fought among ourselves, bleeding from the wounds of battle, weakened and worn, one wonders how can Umno still have strength. So much time has been

wasted and so little time is left before we go into battle again at a general election that gets nearer by the day.

Ask yourselves whether history will repeat itself. Ask yourselves whether we will share the same fate as the Malay sultanate of Malacca after the battle between Tuah and Jebat. Whether one day we will again be as easily colonised by foreigners as came to pass in Temasek, Riau, Bentan and Langkawi because of their in fighting. Our future is our responsibility.

Our success or failure is entirely in our own hands.

MALAY UNITY

Ladies and gentlemen, in charting the long-term agenda to strengthen national unity, Umno is aware that Malay unity must be strengthened first to ensure that we become a community that is united, with a common voice in upholding the core tenets of Islam, the sovereign rulers, the Malay language and the special rights and privileges accorded to the bumiputra. It is for this reason that the party's Supreme Council decided to meet with PAS. In the spirit of Islamic fraternity with the objective of uniting the community, Umno has taken the initiative to offer our hand in the hope that the leaders of the two parties can meet and discuss issues facing the ummah.

It is indeed unfortunate that this initiative for unity has hitherto come to no avail. Umno has been served with many pre-conditions by PAS, who are actively raising obstacles to an effort that can strengthen Malay unity. Instead of focusing on Malay unity, PAS would, for example, rather accommodate DAP, although on many issues the two parties have irreconcilable differences. Yet, in a desperate attempt to woo support from the non-Malay communities, PAS has been trying to portray a liberal stance on various demands raised by these communities.

PAS has for long used religion to divide and cause schisms among the Malays. Now their political agenda has become more damaging for the Malay community. They are readily promising the non-Malay communities that they will compromise on the special rights and privileges of the Malays. In pursuing their narrow political objectives, PAS has no qualms in stating and repeating this stand to sell out the Malay race for the sake of deceiving the non-Malay communities into supporting them.

Does PAS now believe that the Malays should no longer be accorded with their special rights and privileges? Does PAS realise that the Malay race IS the ummah and that it still needs to be protected and assisted? Lest they forget, PAS must remember that their political mandate is derived largely from the electoral support they received in states like Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Pahang in which the majority of voters are Malay. PAS has already exploited religion to cause deep divisions among the Malays, let us not allow them to now forsake the Malays for the sake of attracting non-Malay votes. PAS must stop its politics of hypocrisy of saying one thing to one section of the electorate and something else to another.

Ever since its inception, PAS has been opposed to Umno except for a brief period from 1973 to 1977 when they were together with us in Barisan Nasional. It is now time to set our differences aside. The Malay agenda has not yet been fulfilled. Umno

has extended our hand of friendship in order for the two parties to deliberate and formulate an agenda that is broader than our mutual political aspirations -- an agenda for all Malays, to ensure that we can develop our community so that we will never be tenants or aliens in our own land. PAS must realise that the majority of Umno members are their brothers and sisters -- in race, religion and creed.

Blood is thicker than water.

Umno's door is still open to PAS. The window of opportunity to create cooperation between the two parties has not been shut. We have extended our hand of friendship and we continue to do so. We sincerely believe that even if we can agree on the smallest thing, it will be a great step forward for the ummah, the Malay community that desires unity.

NATIONAL UNITY

Ladies and Gentlemen, the strength and resilience of a multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious nation resides in the understanding, tolerance and respect that the various communities have for one another. Moderation and a balance between different aspirations are crucial for such a nation state to be stable and united. This reality was all too evident at the time of independence, when we became the Federation of Malaya, and later when we became Malaysia.

The dark episode of 13 May 1969 was a consequence of 'Malaysian Malaysia' demands made by opposition politicians which threatened to unravel our consociational democracy. Lives were claimed, property was damaged, streets and homes rampaged, the country was in a state of emergency and, eventually, parliamentary democracy had to be suspended. The recent clashes in Kampong Medan on March 4 2001 underscores the fact that racial and ethnic relations in Malaysia remains extremely fragile and that such issues are still sensitive to many Malaysians.

The social contract that was agreed to by the leaders of all the ethnic communities was achieved through a profound common understanding based on the social, political and economic milieu of the country at that time. On the eve of independence, it was agreed that the non-bumiputeras were to be granted citizenship, while it was also agreed that the bumiputeras would be accorded with a special position and privileges in certain areas. It is therefore, unfortunate that those who were given rights of citizenship, and have accrued the benefits that come with such rights, are now attempting to deny the special position and privileges of the Malays and bumiputera which are still needed to fulfill their intended objectives.

The socioeconomic achievements of the Malays and the other bumiputeras were negligible at the time of independence because of the discriminatory, divide-and-rule policy that was practised by the colonial administration. Conversely, the colonial administration seemed to have had a social obligation to the non-bumiputera communities which they had brought to Malaya to fulfill their discriminatory economic policy.

The Malays and other bumiputeras were aware of the reality that the presence of an increasing number of non-bumiputeras was the consequence of a deliberate policy by the colonial administration. However, as the agitation for independence became a reality, not once did the Malays demonstrate a racist stance towards the non-

bumiputeras. On the contrary, the decision to grant citizenship rights indicates the openness and inclusiveness that prevailed among the Malays at the time. At the same time the Malays and other bumiputeras asked that their special rights and position be respected and upheld so that one day they would be able to lift their economic standards and be able to compete freely with the non-bumiputeras. With this common understanding in place, it facilitated the agreement to allow for independence from the colonial administration. The compact between the various communities also ensured that independence was achieved without raising any concerns or fear among the people about what was to happen to them.

Of late, it seems as though the agreement between the ethnic communities that led to independence and an understanding of each other's positions has been all but forgotten. The special rights and privileges that were accorded to the Malay community have been openly questioned and challenged, without the slightest regard for the sensitivities of the Malays. In some people's opinion, this challenge to Malay special rights has surfaced because of the perception that it was the support of the non-Malays that enabled the Barisan Nasional to prevail in the 1999 general election, and therefore they are now in the position to demand for something in return for their support.

We value this support. We are thankful that the majority of Malaysians made a wide decision in supporting the party that has proven its ability to govern efficiently, justly and equitably. However, the non-Malay communities ought to remember that since the first elections in 1955, the Malays have also voted and supported candidates in the Barisan Nasional, and its predecessor, the Alliance, who were from non-Umno parties. Umno members worked loyally and tirelessly to ensure that candidates from the other component parties won to ensure a Barisan Nasional victory. In supporting the non-Malays, the Malays never agitated for anything that would erode the rights of the non-Malays.

In fact, as the socioeconomic level of Malays improved and we became more prepared to compete, over the years the government led by Umno has gradually introduced policies that are more liberal. History shows that in the context of Umno's struggle, power sharing with other component parties representing other ethnic communities has been the chosen formula ever since the alliance stood together for elections in 1955. The strong unity among Malays was never used to turn against the non-Malays. Programmes to raise the standing of the Malays were implemented equitably focusing on opportunities in education, employment and business without taking anything away from the non-Malays. Our objective of improving the lot of the Malays never resulted in interfering with efforts in the private sector to give opportunities to the non-Malays.

In our efforts to strengthen national unity, we need to implement more effective integration policies and programmes. In this regard, the education system is the best place to foster unity among children so that they will regard integration and mixing with those from other races as something that is natural. The earlier they get to know others from different ethnic backgrounds, the more resilient and genuine the bonds become. Unfortunately, efforts towards greater integration in the education system have been wrongly perceived as efforts to erode the culture and language of the non-Malays by exclusively promoting the Malay language and culture.

Umno gives its assurance and word that we have no intentions to renege on the social contract that was agreed to by our forefathers. Provisions for the freedom to

profess one's religion, to speak one's mother tongue and to live according to one's culture as enshrined in the Federal Constitution will continue to be upheld and respected. UMNO understands and accepts the need for a pluralistic approach to unity and not an approach that is narrow or rigid.

To the Malays, Umno pledges that we will continue to defend the interests of our race. To the non-Malays, Umno promises that our efforts to uplift the Malays are not intended to oppress or marginalise them. Improving the lot of the Malays and uplifting the status and dignity of the Malays remains our primary and preeminent objective. At the same time we guarantee that our policies continue to ensure equality and justice for non-Malays. If we are successful in empowering the Malays so that they succeed, we will, at once, eradicate any suspicion or insecurity harboured by our race. When the Malays are more assured of their standing, cooperation and mutual tolerance with other communities will also improve and strengthen.

The present Malay leadership that prioritises national unity has demonstrated an open and liberal approach to nation building. In the interest of creating a strong and united nation, we are now encouraging greater integration in the workplace. The Government has stated its intention to attract more non-bumiputeras into the public sector, including into the police and the armed forces. We ask that the private sector, in turn, follow suit by opening its doors to even more bumiputeras thereby contributing to our nation building efforts.

We must at all times be wary of complacency and guard against any action that can de-stabilise the racial harmony that has hitherto existed among our various communities. Although we are no longer threatened by the Communist insurgency, we must guard against any subversive movements that are bent on de-stabilising the country by inciting racial hatred and violence. Let us not in any way stoke the fire of intolerance that can result in the ruin of our country.

We realise that we cannot foster meaningful unity among our people overnight -- it is an ongoing effort. It also requires objective and rational thinking. Strong national unity is demanded by our nation's policies and objectives. It is the ultimate guarantor of peace and stability in our country in the long run.

In order to intensify efforts to foster national unity, I call on the Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri Umno to establish multiracial forums and roundtables with our colleagues from the other component parties of Barisan Nasional. More effective and frequent programmes and meetings must be held to discuss and deliberate on some of the sensitive issues affecting each community. Political activities with the participation of all ethnic groups must also be increased and encouraged.

I believe and hope that our activities and programmes - - be they reaching out to society, motivation building, or political education -- can increasingly be implemented together as Barisan Nasional.

Such interaction will give our members the opportunity to get to know one another, to understand one another and to deepen our respect for one another. This cooperation will, no doubt, strengthen the bonds of fraternity within Barisan Nasional and strengthen unity within our ranks in preparation for future challenges.

Umno needs to understand the challenges confronting the party. Money politics has deviated the party from the path of its original *raison d'etre*. In-fighting has diverted Umno from its true cause. If this situation is not addressed, Umno will become a party that is weak and impotent.

The perception that Umno is a corrupted institution must be changed. Umno needs to take firm steps to restore its credibility and image so that some people no longer view it with contempt or disgust. Umno must be saved from the cancer spreading amongst its members. Umno must work towards regaining the people's confidence. Umno and the Malays have always been synonymous in the annals of the nation's political history. To coin an analogy, Umno is the heart of the Malays and the Malays are the life-giving blood to ensure that the heart continues to pump. If Umno separates itself from the Malays and the community's hopes and aspirations, the heart will stop beating.

In this century, Umno faces voters for whom values and principles are formed by differing realities and perceptions than those of the pre- and post-Media period. The voters now are from those who have had quality educational opportunities and are more exposed to the realities of the world. They are also more critical of current events. They are more analytical in evaluating virtues of honesty, cleanliness, trustworthiness and responsibility. They are able to objectively analyse the difference between promises and implementation. They demand an approach, which is more transparent and free of what they define as abuses in the implementation of affirmative action policies to help the bumiputera.

The elder generation from the pre- and post-Merdeka era had stronger ties to Umno as they did not have many political choices then. On the other hand, the younger generation today has alternatives, which allows them to compare and choose. If Umno fails to understand this wave of change, we run the risk of being perceived as a party that is cold, listless and detached. Umno's vision will be regarded as outdated and our cause as obsolete. Umno will then be regarded as unable to fulfil the people's aspirations and unable to keep up with changes in the way that the people think.

Umno now faces a target group that demands a deeper understanding of the meaning and perception of living in an independent country on the verge of becoming a developed nation. Issues such as justice, human rights, freedom of speech, good governance, transparency and accountability, corporate governance, strong judicial institutions and civil society are those that will be given greater attention.

It will take more than just physical or hard development through policies implemented by the Government to enhance the people's confidence in Umno. Such an approach may have been suitable in the 1950s right through to the 1970s when society badly required such development. Those were times when infrastructure development programmes alone could generate the people's support.

Today, waxing rhetorical over historical achievements will not have a deep impact on the public's perception. This phase has passed. Umno cannot depend on approaches used in the 1950s if it hopes to survive in the 21st century. Umno's survival depends on what the party can do now and in the future. Our entire political strategy, and, implementation of party programmes require re-engineering.

Umno's struggle will be regarded as devoid of idealism if it is unable to touch the hearts and minds of, and connect with, the current and future generations. Umno needs to be driven by ideals that are progressive, built upon a dynamic approach, which can be accepted by the people as ideals that they, too, share. Umno's struggle need a fresh impetus so that it will continue to lead the people's struggle which will fulfill the needs and aspiration of the majority of Malaysians.

Ladies and gentlemen, Umno has long upheld democracy that delivers governments elected by the people. This was proven when parliamentary democracy was revived in 1971 after being held in abeyance for 21 months following the incident of May 13 1969. The people's right to determine the government of their choice through free and fair elections which guarantees the right to vote in secrecy will continue to be upheld. These democratic practices will also ensure that the election process will be peaceful, free from fraud and will allow equal opportunities to any of our citizens who wants to come forward as a candidate.

A healthy democracy respects the voice and the wishes of the majority. A healthy democracy not only values a free press, but must be assisted by a media that fulfils its social and political obligations in providing accurate and timely information without sensationalism. A healthy democracy must be supported by non-governmental organisations that are prepared to take collective responsibility in the creation of a civil society.

Umno also values the need for an efficient and responsive government administration, an economic policy that is able to narrow the divide between the haves and have nots, a judiciary that is transparent and independent, and just and fair enforcement of the laws of our land.

However, in our fervour to strengthen democratic practices, we must not act in haste. We must ensure that democratic change does not undermine peace and harmony. Democracy does not mean allowing rabble-rousing which can lead to violence and instability. The stability of a nation must not be threatened and public order must never be compromised. We must not allow ourselves to be manipulated by external forces pursuing their own agendas.

Violent street demonstrations are something that cannot be condoned. Radical changes through violent revolution that can lead to the loss of lives must not be permitted. There is little or no meaning in changes if it leads to anarchy. The people and the nation will be destroyed. All that we have achieved will perish. Building a peaceful, prosperous and united nation takes a long time. Destroying one can happen almost overnight.

Ladies and gentlemen, women have always been a source of strength for Umno. Wanita Umno have set good and admirable examples in terms of the loyalty and the sacrifices made in our struggle. Although the ratio of seats accorded to women, as candidates in the general election and positions in government, are much smaller compared with the numbers that they make up in Umno, the commitment of Wanita towards the party has never wavered. At every instance of challenge that the party has faced, members of Wanita Umno have diligently and patiently carried out their tasks and duties with the utmost responsibility.

The role of Wanita in garnering support for the party through their personal and family-oriented approach is an enormous contribution that has brought victory to

Barisan Nasional candidates in general elections. Wanita Umno has set a high standard, contributing successfully in the nation's political arena. This is widely recognised, with the Opposition now also taking emulative steps to promote the emancipation of women in its political movement.

Those who serve with virtues of honesty and sincerity will be judged by Allah SWT, who determines all. Serve with a clean heart, work with devotion in the name of Allah SWT, who had said in verse 162, Surah al An' aam: "Say: Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, The Cherisher of the Worlds."

Strengthen your personality with your faith. There is nothing more pure than piety and accepting the will of Allah SWT. After all that we have done, we must accept whatever obstacles as the will of Allah SWT. Hold true to the words of Allah and be confident of His promise, as it is said in verse 112, Surah al-Baqarah: "... whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good - He will get his reward with his Lord; On such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Be thankful to what Allah SWT has given us and value the independence granted by Allah SWT upon us. Allah SWT will not take the bounty he has given to his servants who are thankful except to those who had had brought it upon themselves. "Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own souls: And verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth all things."

Enlighten us with faith that is strong, practices that are pious and a clean heart. A strong Umno requires leaders who are clean, trustworthy and honest to themselves, their families, their party, their race, their nation and their religion. These leaders will bear the torch for a struggle based on purity and sincerity, which heeds the call of Allah and emulates the tradition of the Prophet, bringing true meaning to the independence of the nation and fulfilling the people's aspirations. Leaders who are clean will restore the party's credibility. Such leaders will also be able to improve and promote good governance under His leadership and strengthen non-governmental institutions under His stewardship. They will be able to uphold the principles of truth, justice and equality. If the leaders are clean, then Umno will be clean.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us ask of Allah SWT that our nation and our party under the leadership of Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, continues to receive guidance and blessings. Let us ask of Allah SWT that our lives will continue to be protected and guided by Him. Let us all pray that we will avoid that which can lead us to disbelieve in Him or deviate from the true teachings of our religion. Let us together thank the bounties Allah SWT has showered upon us. Together we ask of Allah SWT that in placing tests and obstacles in our struggle, that we perform our deeds with honesty, trustworthiness, justice and equality.

Surah al-Asr reminds us: "By the Token of Time through the Ages, Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, And do righteous deeds, And join together in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy."

With this, we hope that all our efforts be accepted by Allah SWT. Let us ask for his blessing by reciting the al-Fatihah. In the name of Allah, I now declare open the Umno Youth and Wanita assemblies 2001.