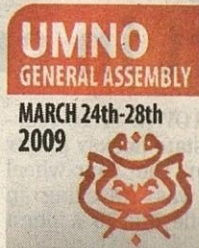


'Give Najib undivided support

N.S.T 24/3/09 MK 25

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Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah step out from their residence Seri Perdana in Putrajaya, to attend the Umno general assembly at Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

In my eyes, Umno was a party that held high ideals; and there was sanctity in its struggle to serve. When I joined, it never crossed my mind that I should expect to be rewarded with any benefits, material or otherwise. I must emphasise that I was not unique; the tens of thousands of my colleagues and compatriots who were in Umno then felt the same way. We all resolved to work towards bringing our people and beloved country to the highest pinnacle of success. In fact, when I officiated at that Youth and Wanita assembly in 1999, the theme of my speech was "Continuing the struggle — Uplifting our people".

Today, not only is my generation decreasing in number, but I fear that the spirit and values that we embraced also seem to be a vastly diminished ideal among the current generation.

Increasingly, people who become Umno members place greater importance on what rewards they can reap for themselves rather than what they can contribute to the party and the people.

They expect positions and projects; they expect titles and awards; they expect material fulfilment. The spirit of sacrifice, the spirit of struggle, the spirit of serving the people and country is fast fading away.

We must come to our senses. Outside the Dewan Merdeka, there are many who believe that if Umno and Barisan Nasional do not change their ways, then the March 8, 2008

power if they safeguard the interests of certain individuals and give in to the demands of certain groups. There are those among us who gain comfort from these thoughts and are still lulled into a false sense of security.

If we revert to the old path, I believe we are choosing the wrong path; one that will take us to regression and decay. It is a path that I fear will hasten our demise. If we do not take courageous steps to reform in the face of this dynamic transformation of society and the radical global changes taking place, then we shall live to wit-

“ IT WOULD BE A GRAVE TRAVESTY IF WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE UMNO, AND AS LONG AS WE DO NOT CHANGE, UMNO WILL NOT CHANGE. ”

ness the end of our beloved Umno.

ment towards the struggle for the people and the party.

Let us revive our willingness to sacrifice, strengthen our dedication, adhere to moderation and be governed by our humanity.

Rid ourselves of our arrogance and the conceit that we are the only ones who are right, that we are the only ones

regulations and procedures that will enable the party to be administered in a more disciplined and controlled manner. Perhaps the party needs a mechanism that provides members with greater say and for us to shed the practices that do not allow those without positions or material wealth to be fairly treated. Perhaps the

to the extent that non-Malays view it as a racist party. The rights of every citizen must always be protected, guaranteed and respected, as provided by the Constitution and as encapsulated in the Rukun Negara. The loyalty of every Malaysian citizen, irrespective of race, must always be appreciated in the spirit of power

prosperous and successful nation. Today, we are faced with the most alarming economic challenges since independence.

The world is struggling to overcome a deepening economic crisis; the government is trying to lessen the burden of the people.

In the 5½ years I have been prime minister, I have become thoroughly convinced of our potential and strength and of God's blessings towards our country. We have youthful human capital that can be developed to make us more productive. We have the resilience to face the threat of recession — as long as we remain united and focussed. We have to reduce politicking and stop our infighting. Instead, harness our strengths, work harder and increase productivity.

Umno faces a life-and-death situation — one that concerns our future and survival. The fate of Umno rests in the attitude of its members and leaders who will carry the aspirations of our religion, people and nation. Umno's members and its leadership will play a crucial role to determine whether developments in the future will reflect the glory of our traditions.

All of us realise that the leadership of Umno forms the leadership of the country. That is the privilege and responsibility that has been granted us, with Allah's will.

All of us know that our leaders must possess noble qualities — *siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (spreading righteous-

ways, then the March 8, 2008 general election will be the last time the BN forms the government. After this (if we do not change), the people outside this hall will not vote for us again. Many have voiced the view that "Umno needs to change". But what I hope to hear is for you to say "I will change" and that we have the courage to follow up those words with actions.

It would be a grave travesty if we do not understand that we are Umno, and as long as we do not change, Umno will not change.

Umno is today at the crossroads. The path that we choose will determine whether we continue to remain relevant or whether we are reduced to a forgotten footnote in the pages of history.

Sadly, there are still those who feel that we do not need to pursue reforms. They believe that Umno will regain its glory if we revert to the old ways — the old order — by restricting the freedom of our citizens and by silencing their criticism. They are of the view that Umno can continue to be in

Umno.

What is the point of fighting tooth and nail for positions in the party if all that remains of us is an obsolete husk?

Allah forbid that Umno suffer such a fate. It is with that realisation, a deep sense of love for Umno, and a grave sense of responsibility to the party and to the Malay race, that I have chosen not to defend my position as president of Umno. I have chosen to pave the way for a younger leadership, even though many within the party and government asked me to defend my post.

I appreciate the similar decision to step down taken by my colleagues and friends, whether at the level of branch, division, Youth, Wanita or Puteri. We have to accept that the reality is that positions and posts are not private property; even your own wealth and possessions cannot be brought with you after death.

For Umno to remain relevant, the party has to fuse its past strengths with the new elements necessary for survival and success. We must rekindle the original spirit and commit-

ments who know all. Distance ourselves from corruption. Let us be equal in our concern for all, be they Malays or non-Malays, party members or those who support our opponents.

In government, I have sought to introduce several mechanisms to strengthen the administration, to make it more transparent, efficient and just, to enhance the public delivery system.

Efforts to restore the integrity of the judiciary have been implemented; the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission has been constituted; the National Integrity Institute established and Pemudah has been introduced. In our efforts to improve the public delivery system, we have prioritised human capital development and we are emphasising progressive Islam through Islam Hadhari. To tap into new areas of growth and to ensure the equitable distribution of quality opportunities, we have embarked on the regional economic corridor development.

In Umno, perhaps the time has come for us to introduce



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time has also come for Umno to consider setting a maximum number of terms for those holding office. Perhaps Umno should also give every Umno member the right to vote to choose their leaders, especially for key party positions, to overcome and eradicate the problem of money politics.

Umno should not turn its back on its responsibility towards safeguarding the position of the Malays and the Bumiputeras. And at the same time, Umno must never adopt racial and religious positions that are extremist. Umno must never practise discrimination

sharing and friendship. We must be conscious of the fact that a long time ago, we had already reached agreement that we would together bear the responsibilities of building our nation; that we would sink or swim together. Let us concentrate on the commonalities that unite us, rather than the differences that can divide us.

I fully appreciate the role that Malaysian citizens have played in ensuring the peace and progress of our nation. In almost 52 years of independence, we have undergone numerous trials and we have been united in facing them, enabling Malaysia to become a

ness) and fatanah (wisdom). Remember — the vote of one who is faithful and fears God cannot be bought and sold. I hope that the Umno elections will proceed without incident and produce results that accurately reflect our aspirations and more importantly, those whom we represent. It is written in the Holy Quran:

"O you who believe! Why do you say that which you not do? Most hateful it is with Allah that you say which you do not do." Surah As-Saff — 2-3

My responsibilities as your president end at the conclusion of this assembly. Soon after, my term of prime minister to the people and the country that I so love will also come to a close.

I want to record my gratitude and thanks for the dedication, sacrifices, support and assistance that you have given me in my 45 years of public service, from the days when I was a civil servant through the time I entered politics in 1978.

I record my appreciation to Datuk Seri Najib Razak for his support in his capacity as deputy president and deputy prime minister.

and trust'

It brings back nostalgic memories of the responsibility and trust given to me by his late father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein since 1969 when I served in the National Operations Council (NOC) Secretariat.

I thank the late Tun Hussein Onn for giving me the opportunity to become a candidate in the Kepala Batas parliamentary constituency in 1978 and subsequently appointing me as a member of the government.

I thank Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for appointing me a member of the cabinet, as deputy prime minister and finally, giving way for me to succeed him as prime minister.

I thank all the respective heads of Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri, the supreme council, the state liaison committee chairmen, the divisional and branch heads, and all Umno members around the country.

I believe that I am passing on the reins to a younger captain to steer the ship; a younger leader who has the maturity and experience to navigate the nation to greater heights.

I urge everyone to give him the undivided support to enable him to bring us to greater success. I pledge to give my undivided support to the new

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Nevertheless, despite any reservations we may have, our leader should be given the trust and stability of mind to allow him to continue to remain rational and objective.

If we do not give him our support and trust, and if we choose to attack him and assassinate his character, we would be responsible for weakening our party and toppling our leader who sits in the prime minister's chair.

We would be responsible for eroding the system that we have built, the system that has



country to the best of my abilities.

In continuing the work of my predecessors, and introducing new initiatives and measures to bring us to greater glory, I acknowledge that it could never have been done without your support, without the support of my colleagues in Umno and the Barisan Nasional, without the support of my friends in the administration, and least of all, without the support of all Malaysians, be it in the rural areas or the cities.

president of Umno — to the new prime minister of Malaysia.

I know from my experience as Umno president and as prime minister of Malaysia that the burdens of the job and the responsibilities that come with it are immense.

There are times when a decision creates controversy; there are times when a decision will not receive the support of all.

It is the duty and responsibility of a leader to decide what is best for the people and the country even though it may cause unease.

enabled us to govern all these years.

Heavy is the trust placed in the prime minister who must fulfil his obligations as leader of the party, of our people, and of our nation. On his shoulders our hopes rest, for he is accountable to secure our future.

In my years of public service, there have been times that I have erred. I, too, have not been able to fulfil all my promises.

For all my mistakes and for all my shortcomings, it has never been my intent to waver from the responsibilities of serving my people and my

Only the Almighty is perfect. I acknowledge here that the weaknesses and imperfections are my own; and today, I seek your forgiveness for those weaknesses and imperfections.

I have tried to carry out my responsibilities with sincerity and honesty. I thank the Almighty Allah for having placed me in this noble position.

In the years ahead, I pray that the Almighty will bless me so that I have peace of mind and soul; I pray that Allah showers His blessings and provides guidance to our party and to our leaders, to the people of Malaysia and to our country, and that He protects us from disaster and misfortune.

It is written in the Holy Quran: *"Whoever desires honour, (power and glory), then to Allah belong all honour, power and glory. To Him ascend (all) worldly goods, and the righteous deeds exalt it, but those who plot evil, theirs will be severe torment. And the plotting of such will perish"*. Surah Al-Fatir - 10

I pray that the fate and future of Umno and our country will always be in the hands of those who are sincere and may Allah prevent Umno and our country from falling into the hands of those who will bring us destruction.

May Allah bless our efforts.



Outgoing Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Umno president-elect Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.