

Democratic Action Party (DAP) to secure victory. This alliance between ex-UMNO officials and the DAP is especially unscrupulous, since the DAP has been critical of the government policy granting economic privileges to ethnic Malays who were historically suppressed by the British in favor of Chinese economic dominance. The DAP has been the main opposition to the Barisan Nasional coalition since its creation by the late Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister, even though the Barisan—which includes the UMNO, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA)—has been crucial in maintaining collaboration among the various ethnic communities.

The opposition has made clear that the Johore Baru by-election is just the first to be provoked by the resignation from Parliament of ex-UMNO leaders.

Not all the opposition is enthusiastic about this destabilization approach. Long-time opposition spokesman Datuk Mohamed Sopiee, in his Aug. 28 column in *The Star*, cautioned, "We cannot afford to harm the political stability of our nation, especially when our economy is showing signs of making a promising recovery. We should not sap our energies and resources by carrying on a running political feud among ourselves." He also admitted that the manner in which all parties involved in the election conducted themselves was proof that parliamentary democracy is not dead in Malaysia, the point being emphasized by the government.

Economic growth

Sopiee's warning that political chaos would threaten the

stability of Malaysia's growing economy hit the opposition's most vulnerable spot. Under Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia has experienced impressive economic development, despite a period of slowdown due to depressed tin prices and the U.S. dollar's collapse. Furthermore, according to recent statistics from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, 336 manufacturing projects involving foreign investment have been approved in the first seven months of this year, as compared to 333 projects approved for the entirety of 1987. These projects are expected to bring in investments worth M\$4.581 billion, and create 64,247 jobs. In addition, manufacturing projects wholly owned by Malaysians are up to 124 as of July this year, compared to 44 projects approved in the same period last year. As far as Bumiputra (ethnic Malay) participation in the corporate sector is concerned, this has increased from 2% in 1970 to 18% as of 1987.

Obviously, under such conditions, the opposition has had a difficult time stirring up discontent with the government. They therefore have had to resort to tactics such as heating up grievances within the ethnic communities against alleged government discrimination. The opposition has also utilized certain sympathetic quarters within the judiciary to wage legal battles against Mahathir. Last spring, they managed to get the original UMNO declared illegal, but Mahathir quickly established a new UMNO and re-registered the old UMNO members. Now, however, their latest tactic of provoking a continuous series of by-elections which are turned into referenda on Mahathir's popularity may pose a serious threat to Malaysia's stability.

Malaysia needs common language, says Mahathir

In an Aug. 1 address reported by the *New Straits Times* launching the "Community Unity Program," Dr. Mahathir Mohamad described the need to create a Malaysian race without eliminating the cultural elements of the various races that have made Malaysia their homeland. All the races were free to maintain their identity in forms of language, religion, and culture, he said. "However, when we achieved independence we made an agreement to accept the official name of the country as Malaysia, our race as the Malaysian race, and our language as Bahasa Malaysia. . . . From the ethnic point of view, we belong to a particular nation. . . .

"We must have a language and a culture that will determine that we are truly a Malaysian race and that we owe our loyalty to the same nation."

He said it would be meaningless for Malaysians to admit they were from the same race if the various races did not interact with one another.

Dr. Mahathir hoped that the older generation who still had certain racial prejudices would not be concerned about losing their ethnic identity.

He said they should not doubt the government's efforts to spread Bahasa Malaysia, adding that if the people could interact and communicate with one another through a common language, the country would be able to create a culture that is truly recognized as Malaysian.

The prime minister said a society that had a common nation, language, and culture would be able to have the same identity and would be recognized as one race, and that "wherever we go, this recognition will be a reality.

"We will no longer be mistaken for another race. When we take pride in this recognition, it is then that a true Malaysian race will emerge."

How long will this take? Two generations, estimated the prime minister, if the older generation stopped influencing the younger generation with their "unfounded" worries about losing their ethnic identity.