

# National unity is our strongest weapon: Mahathir

TANAH MERAH, Thurs. —  
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir  
Mohamed stressed today  
that national unity was the  
country's strongest weapon  
against any threat.

In this context, he said  
Malay unity was vital to en-  
sure continued solidarity  
and stability and added that  
Umno was the only party  
which could unite the Ma-  
lays.

The Prime Minister, Barisan Nasional chairman and Umno president was opening the \$1.2 million Tanah Merah Umno division building here this morning.

Among the more than 5,000 people present were Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Mohamed Yaacob, who is also State Barisan and Umno chairman.

Dr Mahathir stressed that any attempt to split the Malays would have "disastrous effects" and warned of the growing danger of the actions of undesirable elements such as PAS.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the country overcame the British and gained independence because of unity.

He also said that the British had been able to take over the country in the first place because the States that made up the country were unable to build up "family ties" with each other.

"Each State felt alienated and apathetic to each other's needs. Umno was formed to extend channels of communication and, most important of all, to build up the needed family ties.

"Along with it came the feeling of nationalism and the solidarity concept. Other Malay groups soon acknowledged this and this solidarity was enough to dash any hopes the British had of ruling the country," he said.

He added that Umno's success, however, was not viewed favourably by a "power-crazy faction in the party" which left and formed PAS.

Dr Mahathir said the religious overtones introduced by PAS had caused rifts in the Malay community.

He added that Umno would never stoop to the opposition party's level by being opportunists who exploited religion for political purposes.

"We may be powerful but we cannot be arrogant. The power we possess must be tempered by justice and used according to the tenets of Islam," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno must continuously fight for solidarity and if this aim was achieved, Malaysians could stand tall.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* quoted the Prime Minister as reminding Umno members last night not to be overly zealous in countering the onslaught by certain extremist PAS leaders.

"If we keep on reacting to their extremist views, we may become entrapped and lose the backing of our supporters who are moderate but large in number," the agency quoted Dr Mahathir as saying at a dinner for more than 3,000 Umno and Barisan members at the Menteri Besar's residence in Kota Baru.

He also said that PAS wanted to gain power in the east coast because the party's leaders were eyeing oil-rich Terengganu.