

Dr M: I am prepared to

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PENANG, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he was prepared to see anyone in the interest of Umno unity and would accord special welcome to members who were against the court action being taken against the party.

If former Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who failed in his bid to topple Dr Mahathir as Umno president in the April party election, was ready to meet him "he can come to see me".

The Umno president said he would continue to tour the States to talk to members about the need for unity and Tengku Razaleigh "can attend" the sessions.

He said former Umno deputy president Datuk Musa Hitam, who teamed up with Tengku Razaleigh in the party election, was present at the session in Johore and was also present at the State dinner.

"And he came to see me just before he left the country (to be a guest lecturer at the Harvard University)," he said at a Press conference at the end of a three-day visit to Penang.

Also present were Penang Umno chief Anwar Ibrahim and Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu. Last night, the Prime Minister was guest of honour at the State dinner. Among the guests were State Barisan Nasional and Umno leaders, including party vice-

president Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Yesterday, Datuk Abdullah was among the those present at the dialogue between Dr Mahathir and State Umno leaders. He also hosted a private lunch for Dr Mahathir and other Umno leaders.

The Umno president said Datuk Musa came to see him without any conditions attached and if Tengku Razaleigh wanted to come to see him he was welcome but "without conditions".

He was commenting on a report that the former Minister was ready to meet him (Dr Mahathir) to strengthen party unity but on condition that "everybody refrains from act-

ing or making statements which can create disunity in Umno".

Dr Mahathir did not think there was a need for a Mahathir-Musa-Razaleigh roundtable talk as suggested by former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.

"This has never been the practice in Umno or the Barisan Nasional," he said.

The Tunku suggested the roundtable talk after Dr Mahathir, while in Labuan, called on Umno members to close ranks as there was no Team A or Team B in the party.

The Umno president said when Datuk Musa came to see him they spoke for two hours. He said he did not force his

meet anyone

former deputy to come to see him.

"He came because he felt he wanted to see me. We talked about all sorts of problems faced by the party.

"One thing he said was that he does not support the 12 in their court action against the party. I welcome this.

"And I will welcome anyone who does not support the action of the 12 or those who finance them."

Asked to comment on Tengku Razaleigh's statement that he did not understand why Dr Mahathir bore a grudge against him, he said: "I don't know. Ask him."

On whether there was really any party disunity to necessi-

tate his tour of the States, he said as a result of his tour party members now understand that the problem arose out of the struggle for the leadership.

Should anyone think that the tour was splitting the party rather than uniting it "that is his opinion".

"In my opinion, the visits and talks have succeeded in uniting the members," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh was reported to have said that the situation in Umno could not be calm for as long as there was witch-hunting — with personalities from the Cabinet, State executive councils, State

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There is no witch-hunt, says PM

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Umno liaison committee and committees at divisions and branches thought to be aligned to him sacked.

Dr Mahathir said: "There is no witch-hunt."

He said it was important for members of the Cabinet or State executive councils to be able to co-operate. This would not be possible if there were those who were not of one mind with the rest as some of these people had also stated that they had no confidence in the leadership.

Those who had been sacked or dropped had already said at the outset of the election that

they were prepared for that eventuality if they lost.

"And as they had also leaked Government secrets, those who had been sacked must agree that what happened to them was proper.

"After all, those who had won understood that they would stand to lose their posts had they lost. If I had lost, I would not be Prime Minister. That is a fact of life."

In JOHORE BARU, John Kam Reports that when Dr Mahathir was last here on Aug 27, there were two occasions when he and Datuk Musa met face to face. They shook hands and shared jokes.

The first meeting was when Dr Mahathir met the Johore Umno liaison committee, the Wanita Umno and Youth as well as divisional chairmen and secretaries for a talk at the Menteri Besar's official residence Saujana.

Datuk Musa also attended the meeting which was a closed-door affair. After the meeting during a tea break in the compound, the Prime Minister, Datuk Musa, Menteri Besar Haji Muhyiddin Mohamed Yassin, the Speaker of the State Assembly Datuk Syed Zain Idrus Alshahab, together with a few others, were seated at a round table.

Datuk Musa was seated directly across, facing Dr Mahathir, and while having tea, they were laughing, and apparently sharing jokes.

Later in the evening after a dinner, hosted by the Johore Barisan, also at the Saujana, Datuk Musa was seen shaking hands with the Prime Minister. Others who were around also extended their hands as Dr Mahathir walked towards his car.

As pixmen got into position to take a shot of the two shaking hands, the Prime Minister was reported to have said: "He's taking pictures" (referring to a pixman)