

Umno IS

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the same

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Umno that exists today is the same Umno in spirit, struggle, constitution and membership as the one formed at the Istana Besar in Johore Baru on May 11, 1946, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"It is the same party which has been representing the Malays since 1946, the party which stood against the Malayan Union, which fought for Independence, which worked to fill and give physical meaning to Independence and provided the rights of a free society.

"Umno is the party which worked to ensure the Malays and the Bumiputeras had a place in Malaya and subsequently Malaysia. Umno, which was the backbone of the Alliance, and now of Barisan Nasional," added Dr Mahathir.

"The ruling which made Umno unlawful was merely technical, as was its deregistration. Hence its re-registration was also technical. Umno as an instrument to promote the interests of the Malays has never been dead," he said to applause from the 6,000 delegates, observers and well-wishers at the party's general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Setting the pace for deliberations in the next two days, Dr Mahathir said amendments to the party constitution were made because they were essential and to reflect the current development and era.

He said amendments have always been made to the constitution and were aimed at improving party administrative machinery and, in some instances, consolidating the position and authority of the president.

This evolution started in the very early days of Umno when it was led by the late Datuk Onn Jaafar and later Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra.

By

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Dr Mahathir's one-hour-40-minute address was greeted by repeated applause and shouts of approval. He refuted allegations from the party's splinter group that Umno and the Government under his leadership was undemocratic.

He recalled that previous Prime Ministers, in particular the Tunku, had acted sternly against their opponents and had not hesitated to use the Internal Security Act (ISA) to curb such opposition. It was unfortunate that the Tunku himself had chosen to accuse the present Government of being undemocratic, he said.

He drew the audience's attention to the fact that his administration had approved more printing permits for newspapers and magazines, including to those which were clearly critical of his Government.

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Frustrated ex-members behind the problems: Dr M

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Dr Mahathir said such permits would only be revoked if the newspapers instigated racial disharmony as was demonstrated in October last year.

He recalled the incident when copies of the weekly *Mingguan Warta*, published in Singapore, were taken out of the train and set on fire at the Johore Baru railway station at the instructions of the Umno president in the early days of the party just because it published reports critical of Umno.

He said: "If there are accusations that the Government is undemocratic, the reason is because a small group of former members of Umno are frustrated and are trying to undermine the Government's image.

"They hope that their actions would attract the support of foreign media in their effort to wrest control of the party and the Government.

"It is they who are undemocratic. It is they who rejected the decision of the majority. When they were in power they acted cruelly, sacking those whom they didn't like, and being tough on those who opposed them. In States where they had control, those who opposed them were not chosen to stand in elections.

"Who actually is undemocratic — the previous Governments or the

present?," Dr Mahathir asked. The crowd responded with applause.

The party president also stressed that "no one is above the law" as he dealt at length with the rule of law in national administration. He then gave his perception of possible threats to continued national development, the New Economic Policy and elaborated on current programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and improving the living standards of the people.

He also spoke of modern technological inventions and their relevance to the country's industrialisation programmes, pleading with the country's citizens to learn from history some of the pitfalls which had brought earlier civilisations and societies to their knees.

In conclusion, Dr Mahathir said: "Today, we have reached a dangerous phase. The Malays have not achieved the aims for which they struggled. But others are now taking the opportunity to fish in the troubled waters of Malay disunity.

"The Umno leadership now does not want disunity to persist. Umno does not want the Malays to be weak. Umno does not wish the Malays to be exploited. Umno wants the Malays to unite.

"We believe, in fact we are con-

vinced, unity and political strength of the Malays are important for national stability and progress. The fate of the non-Malays are also tied to the political strength of the Malays. If we are responsible towards the nation and all its inhabitants, all efforts must be made towards further strengthening the political power of the Malays.

"It follows that Umno readily accepts whoever wishes to be an Umno member, whether he or she is a former Umno member or not. Umno is ready to negotiate with anyone for the sake of unifying the Malays. Umno is ready to accept PSRM, Pas or DAP members and others from the Malay community as long as they apply and are willing to abide by the policies and the struggles of Umno.

"All who enter Umno shall have the same rights according to Umno's constitution. But these rights must be accompanied by feelings of deep responsibility. The only thing we ask, and appeal for, is to put a stop to the disunity in the Malay community today.

"The Malays have not escaped danger. We have not achieved satisfactory progress. We still face a mighty struggle to make the Malays a respected race in this world."