

Unity not Razaleigh's objective

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah went ahead and tabled a motion seeking to revive the de-registered Umno although he knew he could not win and that his action would widen the rift in the Malay community, said Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He did so to keep his political struggle going and in the process ignored all efforts to re-unite the Malays, Dr Mahathir added.

Speaking to newsmen here, he said it was clear that Tengku Razaleigh had stirred further ill-feeling, adding that once again efforts to reduce tension among the Malays were destroyed.

"In fact, it was not a debate to revive the de-registered Umno at all. Tengku Razaleigh knew he could not win. Yet he persisted in tabling the motion knowing fully its likely outcome," he said.

In what is seen as the most direct and open attack on Tengku Razaleigh since the October Umno general assembly, during which he offered a Cabinet post to the Independent MP for Gua Musang, Dr Mahathir said Tengku Razaleigh had totally ignored the interests of the Malays.

The Umno president gave four reasons why Tengku Razaleigh's attempt could never succeed. They were:

- The de-registered Umno cannot be revived because there is in its place a party by the same name with the same objectives and

almost the same membership;

- Tengku Razaleigh does not have the majority in the Dewan Rakyat;

- While it is true that Parliament has the power (to amend laws), it cannot perform the function of a court of appeal, i.e. overturning the verdict of the High Court in declaring the old Umno unlawful; and,

- The Government cannot use its parliamentary majority as it likes to amend laws. The use of parliamentary majority must be governed by certain principles.

Dr Mahathir said if for the benefit of Umno, the Government invokes parliamentary majority, what will other (component) parties (of the Barisan Nasional) say? What will Umno's reaction be if they too demand the same action when their interests are at stake?

As Prime Minister he would not hesitate to use the BN's parliamentary majority to amend laws if such an action was in the interest of the whole country.

"There must be a limit to the use of parliamentary power," he said, adding that Tengku Razaleigh was fully aware of this when he tabled the motion.

"There was just no precedent to justify the use of parliamentary majority to rectify what is strictly a political problem of Umno.

"As a respectable and responsible political party, it is totally unreasonable for Umno to make use of its parliamentary power for only its own well being.

"Such an abuse by Umno will erode the confidence of other BN component parties and communities in this country," he said.

When it was pointed out that his comments

★ TURN TO P3, COL 7

Dr M: DAP fully behind Razaleigh

NSJ - 9 DEC 1988

★ FROM PAGE ONE

were very strong, he said he was aware of it but added that he wanted to make his stand clear, particularly with regard to the motion.

"The Malays will be strong only if they are united. Tengku Razaleigh knows that. But that is insignificant to him because his real intention is to keep his political struggle alive," he said.

This was strengthened by Tengku Razaleigh's announcement after the defeat of the motion that he and his supporters might vacate their seats so that by-elections would be held. They hoped to use the occasion to further their objective.

"Tengku Razaleigh is not interested in unity. He rejected the offer of a Cabinet post and the membership of the party. He persists in doing things which he knows he cannot succeed," said Dr Mahathir. He concluded that Tengku Razaleigh was pursuing his own high ambition.

Asked what he thought of the role of the Opposition, in particular the DAP, he said:

"Umno's prime enemy is the DAP. The DAP cannot stand a strong Umno struggling effectively for the Malays. The DAP will not support the "real" Umno. In the case of the motion, the DAP was fully behind Tengku Razaleigh."

The DAP members voted unanimously with Tengku Razaleigh and his Independents. The sole Pas member was not present. The Dewan Rakyat rejected the motion by 108 to 35 votes.

When it was suggested that the debate on Tengku Razaleigh's motion had strengthened the democratic practice, Dr Mahathir replied:

"It was a sheer waste of time and mental energy. They (Tengku Razaleigh's camp) came with closed minds. They didn't give two hoots to what the government side said. It was a *sandiwara* (stage play) to Tengku Razaleigh."

Asked if the rumbling in the BN, in particular the stance of the MCA, had anything to do with the development in Umno, Dr Mahathir said:

"While Tengku Razaleigh and his supporters were hammer-

ing Umno in the Dewan Rakyat, two MCA Senators made strong allegations against the Government in the Dewan Negara."

The two were Senator Ng Peng Hay and Senator Lau Keng Siong. In strongly-worded speeches, they, in substance, alleged that the Government had ignored the interests of non-Malays in the implementation of the NEP.

When it was suggested that the incidents in the two Dewans might be a coincidence, Dr Mahathir said he hoped so too.

"When the MCA was in crisis, Umno did all it could to bring about a settlement. Encik Ghafar Baba worked very hard to patch up acute differences among the factions in the party," he added.