

BT 12 MAY 1989

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BY AHIRUDIN ATTAN

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on Umno members yesterday to maintain discipline and unity within the party for a continued political dominance which at this stage remains vital for the economic security of the Malays.

Launching the mass rally to commemorate Umno's formation 43 years ago at the palace in Johore, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is also party president, said the Malays have not reached a stage of progress where they can

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compete effectively in the Malaysian multiracial society, let alone with the more advanced races in the world.

"The struggle of the Malay race did not end with the formation of Umno and the dissolution of the Malayan Union. They have yet to achieve the desired economic progress under the New Economic Policy. They have yet to be able to compete with the other Malaysian races," he added in a speech telecast live over Radio Television Malaysia (RTM).

Therefore, he said, the Malays cannot risk a split among themselves by breaking away from the discipline and the unity that have been the source of strength for the party

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and the race.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he is confident that the Malays, if given the opportunity, have the ability to reach a stage that will ensure them economic security. "But for as long as it takes them to reach the desired stage, they will need to maintain their unity and their political dominance," he said.

More than 30,000 Umno members from throughout the country gathered at the palace grounds to attend the rally and witness the commemoration of the party's 43rd anniversary by the Johore Sultan. They included 200 party veterans who had been specially invited, the various Menteri Besar, and leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties.

The rally marked the climax of efforts in the past year by leaders of the party to encourage existing factions within Umno to close ranks. The party was declared unlawful by the High Court on February 4 last year after a group within the party challenged the proceedings at the Umno General Assembly the previous year.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the formation of Umno 43 years ago was to champion Malay rights and to foster un-

ity within the race, and not for individual gain or purpose.

Discipline and unity within the party have always been the source of Umno's, and the Malays', strength. Attempts in recent years by some leaders to break away from these traditional virtues, he added, have proven to be very costly for both the party and the race.

In calling the Malays within the party to unite, the Prime Minister noted that unity can only be achieved if every party member takes pains to understand the objectives and principles of the party.

"If it is true that the spirit of 1946, the year Umno was formed, lives on in the minds of those outside Umno, as claimed, they should consider joining the party. Only by uniting with the majority can true unity be achieved. When a minority rejects the majority, there can only be a split," he said.

Earlier, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir inspected a guard of honour mounted by 105 Umno members in their traditional red and white attire. This was followed by a "Doa Selamat", a pledge read out by youth chief Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, and the raising of a giant Umno flag on the palace grounds.