

TUNKU CAN MEDIATE IN TALKS: MAHATHIR

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad paid homage to Tunku Abdul Rahman as a former Umno president, first Prime Minister, the Father of Independence and *Bapa Malaysia*.

The party president said he respected the Tunku as an elder because this was the Malay custom. "Furthermore, the Tunku is a member of the royal family of my state (Kedah)."

He lauded the Tunku's concern for Malay unity, and said he was confident the Tunku would mediate between Umno and Semangat 46 without taking sides.

Dr Mahathir said he was sure the Tunku would have the interest of all Malays and the country in performing the role of middleman.

"God willing, Umno's struggle to unite all Malays will be realised with the help of the Tunku," he said.

Dr Mahathir said his meeting with the Tunku on Saturday had paved the way for future talks to calm the political situation, especially among the Malays.

"I had the opportunity to hear the Tunku's views on the subject of Malay unity and the position and rights of all races.

"I also had the opportu-

nity to explain party matters and its position and why Parliament did not have the power to overturn the decision of the High Court that declared Umno illegal," he said.

Recalling events before the meeting, he said that a recent statement reported to have been made by the Tunku had shocked many people.

"Instead of being angry, we controlled our feelings and took the mature path of discussing the matter with him.

"Although the Umno Youth meeting with the Tunku did not resolve the problem faced by Umno and the Malays, it had paved the way for a saner approach.

"While Umno Youth stated the party's stand, the Tunku also expressed his views on and hopes for Malay unity and the role Umno should play," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that members carried a heavy burden because of

the action of those who dragged the party to court.

"In fact, we should not forgive them. But we are willing to control our emotions. Although, we were abused many times, we must remain patient.

"What is more important is to reunite the Malays by opening Umno's doors to all Malays. We accept everyone irrespective of his or her background or role in dragging the party to court,"

Dr Mahathir said.

He also spoke of the Tunku's "extraordinary initiative" in striving for Independence.

"Many said the Tunku's vision to obtain independence from the British would remain a dream. But today we know that the dream has become a reality," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the dignity of the Malays could not be achieved by forcing others to respect them.

Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Malays whether they wanted to succeed.

He said they had succeeded when they were united, as shown by their victory over the British.

He said the Malays had united in 1946 because of outside pressure, which was the threat by the British to "take over" the Malay states.

"In their fright, the Malays united to fight the British. They had no weapons, no money and not many intellectuals. Their only weapon was unity.

"The spirit of 1946 was the spirit of unity that was able to unite the race without considering whether a person was a commoner or royalty, and without being concerned about his origins or district," he said.