

45-MINUTE MEETING

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah met for about 45 minutes today to discuss Malay unity.

The Prime Minister and Umno president told newsmen later that the meeting had been useful, while the Semangat 46 leader described it as positive.

Asked whether the problem between the two parties could be resolved before the general election, Dr Mahathir said: "It could be. If not, it will be resolved during the general election.

Such a scenario is normal in politics, and you must learn to expect it."

He said Tengku Razaleigh insisted that Malay unity should be achieved by reviving the old Umno.

"He said this could be done through parliament by overriding the decision of the court. I explained to him that parliament has no such right," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it would not be fair for the Government to use its majority in parliament to reverse court decisions.

"We are governed by the Constitution. Although we may make amendments, there are certain entrenched clauses we cannot touch," he said.

He said Tengku Razaleigh had told him that he had no mandate to join the present Umno, but would convey his views to his party.

He said the present Umno was similar to the party which was declared unlawful (in February last year). "The spirit and struggle of the party as well as the majority of the members are the same."

Dr Mahathir said Umno was open to all Malays, and positions

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● Mahathir: It was useful ● Razaleigh suggests a second meeting

could be attained through party elections.

Asked whether he had offered Umno posts to Semangat leaders, he said ail had been taken up and he could not ask any of the three vice-presidents to step down.

"However, if a person is popular, he will win in an election (of the party)," he added.

The talk, held in the Prime Minister's office in Parliament House, started at 3.30pm as scheduled.

Tengku Razaleigh arrived right on time with Semangat secretary-general Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat was also present to record the meeting.

The talks began after the two

obliged a large group of local and foreign newsmen by shaking hands three times for photographers.

Asked whether he was disappointed with the outcome, Dr Mahathir replied: "I must say I didn't expect very much to happen at this meeting other than to find out what his stand is."

In the past, he said, the two only knew about each other's stand and views through the newspapers.

On whether there would be a second round of talks, he replied: "If there is a need, then we will meet. I am prepared to meet anybody."

Asked if this included PAS, he said he was prepared to meet representatives of that party as well

He and Tengku Razaleigh will go back to their party leaders. "If the supreme council wants me to meet him again, I will meet him again."

Dr Mahathir said he and Tengku Razaleigh differed over how Malay unity could be achieved.

"There is no agreement on the way we can achieve Malay unity. Tengku Razaleigh agreed with me that there had never been Malay unity.

"Even when we were against the Malayan Union, we found that the Malay Nationalist Party (Parti Negara) disagreed with the rest of the Malays," he said.

He said absolute Malay unity could not be achieved, and what he hoped to see was the majority of the race working together.

Dr Mahathir said he believed there should be constructive opposition, "otherwise the Government may become arrogant."

Tengku Razaleigh, who spoke briefly to reporters, said the two discussed the obstacles to Malay unity.

He said they talked about the possibility of having unity in a wider context "since PAS is outside."

He reiterated that he would not leave Angkatic Perpaduan Umamah because "this also involves the question of Malay unity."

Tengku Razaleigh also said the need for unity was not confined to one race and was important for all Malaysians.

"We discussed many issues in general I presented my case and he presented his we even discussed the CPM (Communist Party of Malaya) peace accords," he added.

He said he suggested a second meeting with Dr Mahathir because "we are still in negotiations."

Pressed for details of the talks, including whether any proposals and offers were made, he said: "You (newsmen) should have been there."