

Dr M and Razaleigh differ in approach

By Sabry Sharif
and Ho Kay Tat

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad invited Semangat 46 members to join Umno and rejected the revival of the deregistered Umno as an approach to Malay unity as proposed by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in their meeting today.

Dr Mahathir, however, said although Umno's doors were open to Semangat 46 members, they would not be given positions as demanded.

"Those who want to be

leaders have to go through the normal election process. If they are popular I am sure they will be elected."

Speaking at a Press conference at Parliament House after the 45-minute inaugural Malay unity talks with Tengku Razaleigh, he said the Semangat 46 leader was not able to decide on his invitation for party members to join Umno as Tengku Razaleigh did not have the mandate.

However, Tengku Razaleigh had agreed to convey this invitation to his su-

preme council and his followers.

This was the first time that Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh had met since they attended a wedding earlier this year.

Also present at the meeting were Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and his Semangat 46 counterpart Datuk Suhaimi Kamaruddin.

While there was disagreement on the approach to Malay unity, the two leaders agreed there was no absolute Malay solidarity and that a constructive

and effective Opposition was needed.

Dr Mahathir said one could interpret that the meeting had failed to achieve its purpose of laying down the groundwork for Malay unity between Umno and its ex-members in Semangat 46.

"It may seem so but I still find the meeting useful," he said, explaining that both leaders were able to have a frank and direct exchange on the problem of Malay unity.

Dr Mahathir said he was willing to meet Tengku Razaleigh again if necessary.

Speaking to newsmen, Tengku Razaleigh described the talks as good, allowing the two leaders to put across their views on how to achieve Malay unity.

"It is the first time we have met to discuss the problem. He (Dr Mahathir) has discussed his case and we put forward ours. It was a good meeting," he says.

"We not only discussed the possibility of bringing

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Dr M on talks with Razaleigh

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ex-Umno members together but also talked about Malay unity in the wider context as Pas and other Malay parties are on the outside."

Tengku Razaleigh said he would convey Dr Mahathir's views to his supreme council before meeting again with the Prime Minister to discuss their reaction.

Elaborating on Tengku Razaleigh's approach to Malay unity, Dr Mahathir said the Semangat 46 leader believed this could be achieved if the Government used its majority

power in Parliament to revive the deregistered Umno.

However, Dr Mahathir disagreed as this would make Parliament the last court of appeal and it involved the party (Umno), which is part of the Government.

"If the Government uses its majority in Parliament to favour itself, then we are not acting with fairness."

The Prime Minister said the danger of making this unprecedented move was that the Government would be tempted to use Parliament to reverse the decision by the courts favour-

ing the Opposition.

"The Opposition party will be deprived of the decision of the court's because of our bias. Whether we are biased towards or against our Opposition, we cannot use Parliament in that way," he said, adding "Parliament cannot usurp the powers of the courts."

He said the law could be amended but this must be before a judgment is made by the court, citing as example the amendment to the Articles of Association of Petronas allowing the corporation to take over Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Berhad.

On Tengku Razaleigh's claims during the meeting that there was an old and a new Umno, Dr Mahathir said he disagreed.

"What I am saying is that there is only one Umno. There was a certain period when the law said there was none (referring to the High Court decision last year to declare Umno unlawful).

"But in terms of membership, spirit and struggle, it was there all the time. It was only a matter of legal requirement that we register the new Umno.

"But whether we register or not, the people in Umno

now are the same people in the deregistered party. Of course, some may not be with us now but even in the deregistered Umno, there were some who left."

Dr Mahathir said he stressed that there was never such a thing as absolute Malay unity and that Tengku Razaleigh agreed with him.

"However, there is majority Malay unity and this is found in Umno which has the support of a majority of the Malaya

"So what we want now is to expand Malay unity within Umno," he added.