

26 APR 1996

Mahathir-Razaleigh

MAHATHIR CONFIRMS RAZALEIGH MET HIM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 26 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today confirmed there was a meeting between him and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and they discussed the political and economic "atmosphere", among other matters.

The Prime Minister said Tengku Razaleigh, however, did not state any wish to rejoin Umno at their meeting which took place before he (Dr Mahathir) left on April 14 for his visit to the Balkan nations.

Speaking at a news conference on his return, Dr Mahathir said the possibility of Semangat 46 becoming a component member of Barisan Nasional had also never been considered.

"It is difficult if we have two Malay parties in BN. The problem of cross-overs might crop up should an individual member feel unhappy (with his party)," added Dr Mahathir who is Umno president.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on recent media reports of meetings between leaders of Umno and Semangat 46.

Asked whether his meeting with Tengku Razaleigh augured well for Malay unity, Dr Mahathir said he did not dare make an evaluation.

He said Umno welcomed any effort to resolve matters between the two parties, but the "objectives of Umno and the ways it pursues its cause must be accepted".

"We have been saying for a long time that Umno is not the property of anyone but belongs to all the Malays," he said.

He said it was a longstanding invitation to members of Semangat 46 to join Umno and the policy remained the same for everyone, be he Tengku Razaleigh or someone else.

Umno was willing to accept all Malays who believed in Umno's cause and the way the party pursued it together with other races within BN, said Dr Mahathir who is also chairman of BN.

Commenting on a call by the national PAS Youth to the Kelantan government to amend the state constitution to clearly define the separation of power and prevent interference by the palace in the state's administration, Dr Mahathir said:

"We view this as justification for actions which we have taken.

"If a ship has two captains, it may sometimes split into two. (That's) troublesome," he said.

The Prime Minister was obviously referring to previous opposition by PAS and Semangat 46 to efforts by the federal government to amend the Federal Constitution to define the powers of the government and the palace and ensure there would be no interference by the palace in the government administration.

On his visit to the Balkan nations, Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the tour and the reception he received but it was an eye-opening experience to see the actual conditions in the war-ravaged Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.

"Although we have seen many pictures on television and in the press, we just cannot imagine the damage (inflicted) in Sarajevo," he said.

Dr Mahathir praised the residents of Sarajevo as resolute and courageous for refusing to flee the city despite the extreme conditions.

Apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr Mahathir also visited Croatia, Macedonia and Malta. -- BERNAMA

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