

03 OCT 1996

PM-Unity

PM AGAIN CALLS ON PAS TO JOIN UMNO

KOTA BAHARU, Oct 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated his call to PAS leaders and members to emulate Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) to join Umno to make Muslim unity more meaningful.

He said that disunity among the Muslims in the country would not be of benefit and would instead be taken advantage of by others whereas "if we are united, we can be a better model for Muslim unity in the world."

"For the sake of the Malay race and the Islam, we should not be too obsessed with a particular faction or party as this is what is actually meant by assabiyah thinking," he said at the Malay Unity rally jointly organised by Umno and S46 here.

Some 50,000 people attended the rally which is the curtain-raiser to the dissolution of S46 to pave the way for S46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and his followers to rejoin Umno.

The last time Dr Mahathir made the call to PAS to join Umno was when he opened a resort at Tasik Kenyir in Terengganu two months ago.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that there was no reason for PAS to continue to reject Umno when the whole world had acknowledged that Malaysia was the most successful Muslim nation which had been able to provide fairness and justice to its people irrespective of race and religion.

"PAS members should not be too obsessed with the party and should not continue to oppose Umno just because some of its leaders, especially in Kelantan, have stated that we are enemies of PAS and because of allegations that Umno members are infidels," he said.

He said that Umno was prepared to accept S46 leaders and members because there was nothing more important in its struggles than Malay unity, sanctity of Islam and national stability.

"Wouldn't it be a happy occasion if this historic and meaningful rally we have this afternoon is joined by PAS leaders and members.

"Wouldn't it be of great benefit and blessings to the Malays and Muslims if we are united. What is the benefit if we continue to be enemies. Look at how disunity has led to the destruction of Afghanistan as a result of Muslims in the country killing each other," he said.

He said that PAS must accept the fact that Umno, which rules the country, had brought great progress to the Malays and Muslims, gaining the respect of leaders of other Muslim nations and "other people no longer look down on us."

In the context of Umno-S46 unity, Dr Mahathir said that Umno is never vindictive and would never look back to remind itself of past events which led to Umno's destruction and the setting up of S46.

"We are able to reconcile because Islam forbids us from continuing to harp on past conflicts due to differences in opinion and wants Muslims to be forgiving," he said.

In jest, Dr Mahathir said that he and Tengku Razaleigh was involved in a boxing match and were enemies for a number of years. However, he said, out of realisation and a strong spirit of unity, he was able to mend fences with the former Finance Minister.

"We will certainly accept anyone who is sincere in uniting with us and prepared to accept Umno's struggles and in this matter, S46 has stated its intention to rejoin Umno and we will accept them with open arms," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he had once been expelled from Umno but "Alhamdulillah, Umno accepted me again...if not how can I ever be Prime Minister."

In relation to the rally, Dr Mahathir said that Umno's determination to promote Malay unity should never be misconstrued as an attempt to undermine or oppress the other races in the country.

"In fact, Malay unity and solidarity is the very basis of the country's integrity, stability and progress," he said, giving an assurance that Umno, the dominant party of the ruling coalition, would continue to be fair and just to the various races. -- BERNAMA

AM RM