

11 MAY 1996
Mahathir-Semangat
SUPPORT PARTY ALSO

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today welcomed Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) declaration of support for his leadership and expressed the hope it will also support Umno. "I will welcome their support also for Umno, not just me, support for me alone will not do," he told a news conference after the end of the Umno Convention at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

"I am thankful for their support," he said.

The Prime Minister also noted that Semangat 46 had yet to enter Umno and was still part of the Kelantan Government.

He was commenting on the statement by Semangat 46 President Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah yesterday that his party would support and cooperate with the ruling party and support Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership as Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno President, said Semangat 46 members could join Umno en bloc but should avoid factionalism.

"When in Umno, they are Umno members and not former S46 Umno members, they will be just Umno members."

"We don't want any faction based on whatever origin or understanding," he said.

"Factions in Umno mean problems," Dr Mahathir said.

Semangat 46 members would have to fill individual membership application forms even if they entered en bloc, he said.

Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh had held two meetings in the last six weeks to discuss Malay unity and the possibility of Razaleigh and S46 members joining Umno.

Tengku Razaleigh and several S46 leaders including Deputy President Datuk Rais Yatim attended the Umno Convention today.

Elaborating on S46 members joining Umno, Dr Mahathir said they in fact had never left Umno.

"Umno was ruled unlawful and we formed Umno Baru and they formed another party and thus the question of leaving and rejoining Umno does not arise," Dr Mahathir said.

Replying to reporters' questions, the Prime Minister said as far as he knew no one objected to S46 members joining Umno.

Asked whether Barisan Nasional's chances of assuming power in Kelantan were brighter with the support of S46, he said: "Brighter but whether we can former a government is not certain yet." -- BERNAMA

RAM AZZ AAM