

09 MAY 1996

Razaleigh-Unity (Special Report)

TENGGU RAZALEIGH SAYS MALAYS MUST UNITE

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, May 9 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who has told Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he may rejoin Umno, said effort to unite the Malays must be made regardless of their differences in thinking.

The Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president said the differences did not hamper effort to bring them together.

"If we can persuade all sides to unite, irrespective of their views so long as they are Malays ... we will have achieved our objective.

"I don't believe all Malays would think alike and after receiving an education I don't think they can accept just one line of thinking, be it in politics or other fields," he said in an exclusive interview with Bernama on Tuesday, hours before he met Dr Mahathir for the second time in a month.

He appeared happy and excited by the prospects of achieving Malay unity as he spoke.

Last night, Dr Mahathir in responding to questions by reporters revealed that Tengku Razaleigh had expressed his intention to rejoin Umno at their two-hour meeting at Sri Perdana the previous night.

Tengku Razaleigh was a top leader in Umno before the party was declared an illegal organisation by the High Court in 1988 following a suit brought by some members dissatisfied over the results of the party elections the previous year in which he lost his bid to unseat Dr Mahathir as president.

Umno was subsequently deregistered and a new Umno was formed but Tengku Razaleigh did not rejoin it. Instead, he formed Semangat 46.

Looking back to 1946, Tengku Razaleigh said the founders of Umno came from varied backgrounds -- "Ulamak, non-ulamak, the intellectuals, the rich, the poor, royalty, commoners" -- and many places.

Despite that, there was no impediment to uniting the Malays but rather the joint effort gave strength to it, he said.

"It is not absolutely necessary that everyone must accept a single idea; that would further weaken the Malays," he added.

Asked on the significance of May 11 -- the date of Umno's establishment and the day this Saturday when the party marks its 50th anniversary -- to him, Tengku Razaleigh said: "This is a holy date to me because it was then that the Malays began to recognise what unity is all about.

"That unity gives them strength; not wealth, not anything else.

"Secondly, since 1946, because of the unity established, we do not differentiate ourselves from the aspect of regionalism, whether we are people of Pahang, Selangor, Kelantan; we are united as the Malay people.

"Although there is still a little (regional feeling) it is not as intense as before. This is to our good."

Asked what has to be done to further unite the Malays, he said it all hinged on influence.

"For instance, before 1946, there was a common threat -- an external threat which frightened the Malays since they believed they would lose their sultans, their country and their dignity.

"So the Malays banded together and became a force strong enough to defeat the British and nullify the Malayan Union," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said the Malays need to strive for that spirit of unity.

"We hope those in power will open the door to all lines of thinking in order to unite the Malays," he said.

He said that after the Malays were united, other races would give their support to the unity achieved and, in the process, ensure the solidarity of all the people. -- BERNAMA

AZZ CTL