

22 JUL 1999

Mahathir-Forgiving

KU LI AND DR MAHATHIR ARE FORGIVING

KOTA BAHARU, July 22 (Bernama) -- The atmosphere at the meeting involving the Prime Minister and Kelantan Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders today turned into a historical event when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad openly sought each other's forgiveness over their personal political disputes which started in 1987 and led to the split among Umno members.

The apologies were expressed spontaneously when they each addressed the gathering at the main hall of a leading hotel here leading to loud applause from Umno members from various levels including several Ministers and Menteri Besar as a sign of happiness. The gathering was held in conjunction with the Prime Minister's two-day visit to Kelantan.

It started when Tengku Razaleigh, chairman of the Kelantan Umno Liaison Body, unexpectedly recalled his political dispute with Dr Mahathir which led him to form the Umno splinter party -- Party Melayu Semangat 46 (S46).

"In all sincerity, I wish to take this opportunity in front of everyone, to seek forgiveness from him (Dr Mahathir) for all my wrongdoings in the past.

"With the Doc's (Dr) permission, from Ku Li and sincerely, for things I have done wrong and offended you, I hope you'll accept my apology," he said looking at Dr Mahathir who was sitting behind him.

Tengku Razaleigh also sought forgiveness from Umno members and urged them to treat the incident as a valuable lesson in meeting the bigger challenges ahead.

"I humbly appeal to (Umno) supporters, let by-gones be by-gones and let's be magnanimous for the sake of our future generation.

"Discard our ill feelings and let us get together and unite to strengthen Umno and uphold the dignity of the race and nation," he said.

According to Tengku Razaleigh, he and Dr Mahathir actually had a common objective that is to strive through politics to bring prosperity to the rakyat.

In jest, he said both of them were born in the "year of the ox" according to the Chinese calendar and "they say those born in the year of the ox are hard working, regardless of time to provide comfort to others, but occasionally they fight each other too."

Dr Mahathir, who spoke afterwards, also apologised to Tengku Razaleigh if the former S46 president had any feeling of anger against him.

According to him, in politics anything could change except for one, that is the objective to ensure that the rakyat continued to live in harmony and prosperity while the country's independence continued to be safeguarded.

The Prime Minister said that 1987 was an unfortunate year for Umno and the Malays when the party was declared an unlawful body by the court which led him to be extremely angry at Tengku Razaleigh whom he held responsible for the de-registration of Umno.

"At that time I resolved that I would no longer talk or befriend with Tengku Razaleigh...similarly with Tengku Razaleigh who harboured the same feeling towards me...but eventually we put aside our ill feelings," he said.

He said the feeling of anger had actually deviated the original objective of the struggle and after realising it they agreed to "forget the ill feelings" to achieve the objectives of the cause of the people and

country.

"This is the characteristic which will ensure victory for us," he said to loud applause from the 2,000 people at the gathering.

Also present at the function were Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Abu Zahar Isnin, acting head of the Umno Youth movement Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein and federal ministers from Kelantan namely Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, and Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

-- BERNAMA

RAR AO