

11 MAY 2003

Mahathir-Anniversary

PM LAUNCHES 57TH UMNO ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the 57th Umno anniversary celebrations in a colourful ceremony at the Merdeka Stadium here tonight.

It began with the inspection of a parade by Dr Mahathir, the fifth Umno president.

This was followed by the raising of the Umno flag and the rendition of the songs "Bersatu Bersetia Berkhidmat", "Umno Teras Negara", "Ikrar Pemuda", "Maju Wanita Umno" and "Melati di Tapal Batas" and the Barisan Nasional song.

Dr Mahathir and other Umno leaders also performed the cutting of the "pulut kuning" (glutinous rice cake) ceremony, expressing gratitude to God the Almighty that Umno, or the United Malay National Organisation had stood the test of time since it was formed on May 11, 1946.

Earlier, a group of parachutists landed in the stadium, carrying the Umno flag and portraits of Dr Mahathir and the four past Umno presidents.

Some 40,000 Umno members and supporters were also entertained to a display by a group of paragliders and the Kuala Lumpur night sky was lit with a dazzling fireworks display.

The event is meaningful to Dr Mahathir, who has led the party for over two decades and could be one of his last official functions as the Prime Minister of Malaysia and President of Umno.

The illustrious statesman, who has gained international recognition, had said that he would resign from government and party posts this October. He had named Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his successor.

Dr Mahathir also gave a speech at the ceremony which was telecast live over Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) and themed "Perjuangan Sebuah Bangsa" (Struggle of a Nation).

It was here at the Merdeka Stadium that the country's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj declared the country's independence from Britain on Aug 31 1957.

-- BERNAMA

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