

Umno No. 2 need not be DPM — Mahathir

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PENANG, Sun. — Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that it is only a tradition for the Umno deputy president to be the Deputy Prime Minister.

But sometimes a tradition have to be ignored, he said. Quoting a popular Malay proverb, "Biar mati anak, jangan mati adat," (let the child, but not tradition, die), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir asked: "If the child dies, then who will carry on the tradition?"

There is no law stipulating that whoever becomes Umno deputy president would automatically become the Deputy Prime Minister of the country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno deputy president, said.

He told the Bukit Bendera Umno division delegates' conference today

he did not wish to make any assessment on any candidates who would be nominated to either the Umno Supreme Council or the vice-presidency or the deputy presidency or "even the presidency, that is if I'm not the one nominated."

"This is because the system of our party is that whenever a leader is chosen, the leader must work closely with party members so that collectively they can lead the party towards betterment," he said.

If initially, it had been decided who should be the companion for a leader and if the companion was not chosen eventually, then the feeling of dissatisfaction would arise.

"This will not bring about an effective and up-to-date administration. This is the reason why I don't want to commit myself in the election of party leaders.

"However, a leader should be willing to make himself a slave to the party. He should not choose the post that he feels he should hold," he added.

A candidate should accept nomination for the party election but he should not choose to hold the post he likes.

"If the party wants to give him the post of president, he will be president, if it wants to give him the post of deputy president, he will be the deputy president. If it wants to give him noth-

ing, then he will have none."

He said many party leaders were expected to lose in their contests for Umno supreme council posts.

"But we should not hold the attitude that because we lose in the contest, we don't want to be close with Umno. However, I am confident our leaders will continue to give their services to the party."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was best one did not decide what post one should hold in the party. "We must accept whatever post we have been picked for."

He said he had accepted his nomination for the post of deputy president. "But now there are nominations for me for the president's post. If they nominate me for the president's post, then it's good because I also accept it," he said.

"If there are more than one nomination for the president's post, then I must take the opportunity to contest for

the deputy president as well.

However, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was up to Umno members as "I do not want to give any indication regarding this matter as I regard party members as wise. They know who they want to be their leaders."

On the campaigns being mounted for the June 26 Umno election, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said this was something encouraged by the party itself.

Unpopular

Umno is a party which is well-organised as this is important for its stability, he said.

"Every year, we hold the party's divisional general meetings, which are normally opened by party leaders from other places," he said.

"We observe that this year not only Federal Ministers have been invited to open such meetings, but also many Mentri's Besar from several states.

"This action is very important as party members can get close to the leaders. Without this we will not get the opportunity to know them better, especially the Mentris Besar who are only confined to their own states," he said.

He said the Mentris Besar were also national leaders but in view of their responsibilities to their states, they seldom get the chance for close rapport with members in other states.

It is fortunate Umno practises the democratic system in choosing its leaders. The members will have a chance every three years to choose others in place of the leader who had not carried out his duties well.

"But sometimes, it is the Malay's attitude not to raise any feeling of frustration. Instead we want to restore leaders to their positions although we don't agree with them," he said.

"Thus undesirable matters will arise and the party will become weak and members leave the party."

So far this had only happened at the divisional level and not at the national level as "we are able to know our leaders better and can make personal assessments of them."

"There are people who are proud and there are others who behave as if they are leaders when they are not yet leaders," he said.

Later, in Klang, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir reminded Umno members to be cautious when criticising the Government.

Stressing that Umno is the thrust of the present Government, the Deputy Prime Minister, said: "If we don't like any of our leaders, then when party elections come, don't vote for them."

Umno was formed not to make their leaders popular but to place the Malays in their rightful position in the country, he told the Shah Alam Umno division delegates' conference.

He said Umno members must be brave in facing facts squarely and be direct in wanting to rectify any weaknesses in

the party or Government. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also said a leader has heavy responsibilities to the people and country and should not be concerned only with making a name for himself.

The responsibilities of a leader is not to gain popularity. "I would prefer to be unpopular rather than see the Malays suffer."

The Deputy Prime Minister said the Government sometimes faced difficulties in responding to criticism by Umno members over such vital issues like the New Economic Policy and inflation.

"At times the Government does not wish to reply to criticisms. But if we don't explain we may lose and if we chose to explain we may also be misunderstood."