

# Musa gets PM's confidence vote

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday gave his deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam, an unequivocal vote of confidence. The Prime Minister said he owed thanks to Umno delegates for electing Datuk Musa Umno deputy president.

The statement, made at the opening of the 34th annual delegates' conference of the party in Kuala Lumpur, was seen as underscoring the Prime Minister's concern over continuing rivalry in Umno following the unprecedented contest during the 1981 party election.

"I offer my gracious thank to Allah because in performing my duty as the president of the party and the Prime Minister, I am being assisted by efficient colleagues," he said.

"Together with Datuk Musa Hitam as deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister, an effective team has been created that enables us to make several changes which are considered crucial for the well-being

of the country," he added. For that, said the Prime Minister, he thanked the delegates to the 1981 general assembly for electing a deputy party president, who can work with him as a team member.

Dr Mahathir said because he and Datuk Musa could work together, the task of leading the country became easier and more effective. The Prime Minister's state-

The last contest was in 1981 when the highlight was the battle for the post of deputy president in which Datuk Musa Hitam defeated Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

Dr Mahathir stressed that what he said in his speech was in line with the long-established tradition of the party of always insisting on continuity of the top hierarchy.

He remarked: "I do not

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ment, which came towards the end of a 90-minute address, was received with applause.

Although the plainly worded statement clearly suggested that he wanted the status quo maintained in as far as the post of deputy president was concerned, Dr Mahathir told newsmen after the address that he would not take sides in the event of a contest for the post in next year's party election.

think that I am taking sides. At a certain stage, I feel that I have to state the facts as they are. I will continue to speak openly as and when necessary."

Asked whether his speech might be interpreted by delegates as supporting Datuk Musa, Dr Mahathir said that it was up to them to decide. In any case, he said that he hoped to maintain the present team because it was effective.

Dr Mahathir remarked that the tradition should continue beyond 1984 saying that a disruption caused by selfishness could result in the collapse of the existing stability and structure.

He insisted that he was well aware of the rights of delegates to pick their own leaders, but reminded them of the need for "judicious use" of that right.

Asked for his response, Tengku Razaleigh said he left it to party members to decide whether there should be a contest or not. "A candidate nominated by something like 50 per cent of the divisions would be foolish to ignore this demonstration of support."

The Finance Minister, agreeing with the Prime Minister that there should be party stability, pointed out that Umno would always close ranks when its existence, or credibility, was threatened. He declined to predict whether the president's speech would have adverse effect on the likelihood of his candidacy.

Umno Youth leader, Encik Anwar Ibrahim, remarked that the speech should not be interpreted as indicating that the Prime Minister was taking sides. It was necessary for the party president to insist on party stability since this could very well determine the party's future.

But two delegates from Malacca and Pahang who stood up to debate the presidential speech said what Dr Mahathir said did amount to taking sides.

The Prime Minister

said each member of Umno's supreme council and the Cabinet had important roles to play in his respective offices. He said contrary to speculations, no major changes were made during Cabinet reshuffles because continuity was essential.

Saying that personal ambition that took no account of team work could hurt the party, Dr Mahathir warned "lieutenants" of prospective contenders not to get carried away.

"Their position in the party is not that secure. They must be very careful," he warned.