

# EX-LEADERS CAN STILL SERVE: PM

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(P) KUALA KRAI, Fri. — Former Umno leaders should not despair if they no longer hold posts because they can still help in its struggle, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Umno president and Prime Minister said many former party leaders felt that they were no longer valuable to it.

"This should not be the attitude.

"You may not have the connection or ties any longer but as an ordinary member, you can still contribute to the party's struggle and its efforts to achieve its objectives," he told Umno members when opening the Kuala Krai division meeting at the Pahi Secondary school, about

5km from here.

He said personal interests in the party had "no bearing in the party's direction" and "whatever happens to us is not important."

He also said it was the responsibility of every member to ensure that the party's struggle bore fruit.

Dr Mahathir said he was proud that there were no ill feelings between former leaders and the present leadership because "we all understand the true value of unity."

He cited the example of former Deputy Works Minister Datuk Dr Nik Hussein Abdul Rahman who willingly resigned from his post last year.

"When he was still Deputy Minister, he voiced

his decision to step down from the post many times but I rejected his requests.

"But when he finally stepped down, I was happy that it was done in a cordial manner and there were no ill feelings when I did not include him in my Cabinet.

"This is the spirit of unity I hope will prevail in every Umno member."

Dr Mahathir said Umno remained a dominant force on the country's political scene because its members believed in its struggle.

He said that after almost 40 years of existence, Umno had surpassed many post-war political parties in other countries which did not survive.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno, like other post-war political parties, was formed with the intention of achieving independence from colonialists.

"The zealous anti-colonial spirit that existed then was enough to oust them but sadly, these parties could not survive the storm that was unleashed within themselves and as a result, ceased to exist.

"But in Umno, after four presidents, we have survived and in fact have grown stronger."

Dr Mahathir said Umno had withstood the turbulence that usually arose when leaders came and went.

He also urged Umno members to discard any feelings of provincialism because "such feelings

would lead to our downfall."

Dr Mahathir said the spirit of pre-Independence days must be revived now because "it is a strong weapon."

However, he said, such spirit seemed to be lacking now.

He reminded Malays that there are many opportunities that can be exploited.

"We now have the brains and capability to do things beyond our imagination.

"The country used to be hopeless and we could not even make a needle but now, we make our own cars.

"We have managed to get the world's attention and respect and we are no longer belittled," he said.