

Rubbing shoulders and currying favours

IT IS not always true that people who rub shoulders with Ministers do so because they seek favours, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said Ministers had to meet people as it was part of their job. They had to talk to their officers and constituents.

"But, in general, Ministers do not like people to be close to them as they would be swamped with all sorts of requests," he added.

Dr Mahathir said people who make such allegations were those who failed to obtain "something" after having "rubbed shoulders" with Ministers.

The Prime Minister told this to delegates in his winding-up speech at the 36th Umno General Assembly yesterday.

The Umno president said Ministers welcomed meetings with people who needed help to solve genuine problems pertaining to the party or the Government.

But visiting Ministers to gain favours, like obtaining licences, was definitely out.

The processing of licences, for instance, involved scrutiny of applications by Ministry officers.

Dr Mahathir said the views of these officers could not be dismissed simply to favour a particular applicant.

On a matter raised by a delegate from the Batu division on why the contract for the Putra World Trade Centre was not given to a Bumiputera, Dr Mahathir said the question of who obtained the contract was immaterial.

"The fact that the contract did not go to a Bumiputera does not mean that there is no Malay involvement in the construction of the building. Why don't you ask who the architect is and who owns the building. Look at the design and the decor. Everything about the building reflects the Malay identity.