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JITRA, MARCH 1 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID THAT UMNO DIVISIONS NOT AFFECTED BY THE REDELINEATION EXERCISE OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD MAINTAIN THEIR PRESENT LEADERSHIP.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE PRESENT LEADERS WAS STILL IN EFFECT AND THAT THEIR POSITIONS SHOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO UMNO PRESIDENT, SAID THE ELECTION OF DIVISION HEADS SHOULD ONLY BE HELD FOR NEW UMNO DIVISIONS CREATED FOLLOWING THE NEWLY-DEFINED CONSTITUENCIES.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER CHAIRING A KUBANG PASU UMNO DIVISION MEETING HERE LAST NIGHT, HE SAID THAT THE DIVISION WOULD BE HOLDING ITS DELEGATES' CONFERENCE IN MAY.

WHEN ASKED ON THE INCIDENCE OF +MONEY POLITICS+ TO SECURE POSTS IN THE PARTY, HE ADVISED UMNO MEMBERS TO RESIST SUCH A PRACTICE. --

+I HAVE TOUCHED ON THIS MATTER MANY TIMES. THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME TO KEEP REPEATING IT,+ HE SAID.

ON THE KUBANG PASU UMNO DIVISION MEETING, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT HE EXPLAINED TO PARTY MEMBERS THE CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, THE REASONS FOR DATUK SERI SYED NAHAR SHAHABUDDIN'S STEPPING DOWN AS MENTERI BESAR AND THE APPOINTMENT OF DATUK PADUKA HAJI OSMAN AROFF TO SUCCEED HIM.

THE NATIONAL PADI AND RICE AUTHORITY'S PURCHASE OF PADI DURING THE CHINESE NEW YEAR HOLIDAY WAS ALSO DISCUSSED, HE SAID.

THE FARMERS ALLEGED THAT THE AUTHORITY MADE SIGNIFICANT CUTS ON PADI PURCHASES BASED ON THE QUALITY, MOISTURE CONTENT AND AMOUNT OF UNRIPE GRAINS.

+DATUK PADUKA HAJI OSMAN WILL TRY TO RESOLVE THE MATTER,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS MOST CONCERNED OVER PROBLEMS FACED BY FARMERS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE MENTERI BESAR HAD EXPLAINED THE PROBLEM TO HIM.

ASKED IF HE MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, HE SAID: +IN GENERAL, ALL (PARTIES) MUST BE PREPARED,+

WHEN ASKED IF SUCH +PREPAREDNESS+ MEANT AN EARLIER ELECTION, HE SAID THAT ONE SHOULD ALWAYS BE PREPARED.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION ON SIME DARBY'S PROPOSED TAKEOVER OF THE TYRE COMPANY, I.T. INTERNATIONAL -- WHICH HAD CAUSED CONCERN AMONG CERTAIN QUARTERS, INCLUDING UMNO YOUTH -- HE SAID THE VIEWS OF THE MOVEMENT AND BUMIPUTERA INTERESTS WOULD BE CONSIDERED.

THE YOUTH WING HAD URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE TAKEOVER WOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE BUMIPUTERA EQUITY IN THE COMPANY. --
BERNAMA