

PM: Retain all Umno divisional heads

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JITRA, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night urged Umno members to retain all divisional heads in the party elections.

He said they should be given a chance to prove themselves.

Most of them were elected to office last year and by right, should remain in office for the next two years. However, this pattern was disrupted because the party had called for another party election at branch and divisional levels this year.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Kubang Pasu Umno division committee meeting, Dr Mahathir who is also the party president hoped there would not be any contest in existing divisions.

However, he agreed contests are inevitable in

newly created divisions following the delineation exercise.

Dr Mahathir dismissed the popular notion that leaders in Umno will be the automatic choice for candidacy in a general election.

"This notion is wrong. Candidates are not picked from among divisional heads or those who hold certain posts in the party," he said.

He also reiterated his advice to members against using money po-

litics to secure positions in the party.

The Prime Minister urged Umno members to prepare themselves for a general election.

"The general election can take place anytime. We must always be geared for it," he said.

On the dispute between padi farmers and the National Padi and Rice Board (LPN), he expressed concern over the situation and pledged to try and overcome the problems.

Pledged

"I have been informed of the situation and have asked Menteri Besar Datuk Paduka Haji Osman Aroff to take the necessary measures to resolve the problems.

"The Government is always concerned about the welfare of the farmers because they are among the strongest supporters of the Government," he said.

He also assured Umno Youth leaders that the Government is monitoring the developments surrounding the position of IT International's tyre factory in Alor Star.

"We will see to that the equity of Bumiputeras will not be jeopardised," he said.

He said this following speculation that the company would be taken over by Sime Darby, thus reducing Bumiputera stake in the company.