

Contest

not a

proxy

fight,

says

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Mahathir

UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday dismissed talk that the contest for the Youth president's post was a proxy fight between him and his deputy, Datuk Musa Hitam.

"The whole issue was wrongly interpreted by certain quarters. The same thing had been said in the past, especially during the last two Anwar-Suhaimi contests. As far as Umno is concern there is no loser in the contest," he told reporters after opening the 37th Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir added that the contest between Encik Anwar Ibrahim and Syed Hamid Albar was friendly and did not indicate any leadership struggle.

On Encik Anwar's victory, he said it does not reflect anything except that the majority of the delegates voted for him to continue leading the movement.

Dr Mahathir said differences within the party is normal in any society but this will not in any way disrupt Umno's objectives. What is more important is that the Umno machinery will run effectively.

When asked about the same subject, Datuk Musa said he had denied several times that the contest was a proxy fight. He regretted that the delegates who held on to the opinion stating otherwise.

He said the proxy fight opinion was buried so deep in the minds of the delegates that he was considered anti-Anwar.

He added that his opening speech was not aimed at criticising the Umno Youth leader but merely as an advice to the delegates of the government policies and Umno's objectives.

"I will be criticised heavily if I have spoken outside the assembly and not through Umno channel. I feel this is the right place to remind the Youth movement of the party's development."

Datuk Musa said the fact that he was not in the Government gives him more freedom to convey opinions to the delegates.

"If my speech is considered blunt, than this bluntness should not be the sole right or monopoly of the Government. The delegates and the society, for that matter, can also be blunt in their comment towards the Government," he said.