

Mahathir: We need the opposition

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By Robert Ho

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that there was a need for opposition parties in the country to enable the Government to "read its reflections."

"If we have every party that wins in the general election joining the coalition, literally, we will have a one-party State.

"If this happens, we cannot read our reflection as we will only be standing on one side," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters here.

He was commenting on a recent statement by former MCA acting president Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan that the DAP should join the Barisan Nasional to enhance political stability.

Asked if he did not favour Dr Neo's suggestion, Dr Mahathir, who is also

Barisan chairman, replied:

"I am not saying I am not in favour of the DAP joining the Barisan Nasional. I am just saying we need opposition."

He denied reports that he had discussed the matter with DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang in a recent meeting.

"That meeting, I confirm but it was on other matters," he added.

Dr Mahathir, however, declined to comment on reports that the MCA was thinking of moving a motion in Parliament to extend the time limit for its former party president Tan Koon Swan to take his oath of office as MP for Gopeng.

He said that there was "plenty of time."

Under the Constitution, Mr Tan must take his oath of office as an MP within six months of the day he is elected, failing which his seat falls vacant.