

Ghafar clears doubts about his partnership with Dr M

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TANJUNGPINANG, Sat. — Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba said today he and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have been able to work as partners for the development of the country and the benefit of Umno.

He said the fact that the Prime Minister had appointed him to the second highest position in the Government and his acceptance of the Deputy Premier's post were clear proof of their ability to work together.

Encik Ghafar, who is also the party's vice-president, said his partnership with Dr Mahathir should not be misconstrued as intent to topple anyone.

Opening the Tanjung Karang Umno divisional delegation meeting here, he said in efforts to consolidate the party strength as well as that of the Government, he and the Umno president shared similar opinions.

By FARUSH KHAN

regardless of whether he held any important position or not and urged party members to have confidence in the party leadership.

He said he had tried to contribute as best as he could while he was out of the Cabinet between 1976 and 1986.

"Have you seen me stabbing anyone's back during that time? Or have I made any destructive criticism of the party or the Government?" he asked.

According to him, he preferred to approach the party leadership personally for clarification and discussion when he had doubts about any party action or decision.

He cited the recent constitutional crisis and the MCA crisis as some of the issues which involved discussion between him and Dr Mahathir.

Encik Ghafar said when he

"I hope my explanation will dispel scepticism about our partnership," he told more than 2,000 Umno delegates and members at the opening ceremony.

Today's statement was the strongest indication he had ever given on the possibility of his contesting the post of party deputy president, now held by former Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Musa Hitam, at the April 24 annual general assembly.

When asked later, Encik Ghafar said the nomination was still open and that he had not made any decision on the matter.

He left it to the delegates to choose their leaders at the assembly.

"Let us not form cliques on this matter as it will only weaken the party," said Encik Ghafar, who is also Barisan Nasional secretary-general.

He said he would continue to support the Umno leadership as well as the Government, re-

was satisfied with the party president's clarification on any issue, he would express his support for the president.

He questioned the intention of those who tried to insinuate

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things against the Government or the party from outside.

"What is the use of insinuating as people can still understand it. It is better to speak out openly," he said.

Likening party squabbles to misunderstandings between married couples, Encik Ghafar said demonstrating animosity between husbands and wives in public would be a shameful thing to do.

Urging Umno members to refrain from petty squabbles, he asked them to close ranks instead in efforts to forge unity and prosperity in the party and the nation.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Umno members should contribute to the betterment of the party, whether they hold any post or not.

"To me, holding a post or not is just the same. What is important is everyone of us must contribute in the interest of future generations," he said.

Encik Ghafar expressed his

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support for the Prime Minister's efforts to set up industries to manufacture goods for export.

Dr Mahathir, he said, had shown profound interest in such projects. The Prime Minister has even set up a small room in his residence to make furniture from wood.

He said Dr Mahathir also made use of the very little time he had between the heavy working schedule to attend to a motor engine he placed in his office.

This, he said, showed that the Prime Minister was really serious about acquiring knowledge in the various fields.

Encik Ghafar also spoke on the success of Dr Mahathir's national car project, saying that the Prime Minister had proved the sceptics wrong when the Proton Saga attracted the interest of many countries within a one-and-a-half-year period.

"I am very confident, despite being a small country with a population of only 15 million, Malaysia can progress well under the leadership of Dr Mahathir," he said.

He said unlike some other democratic countries, Malaysia had truly adopted a party controlled Government concept where the head of the party also acted as the head of the Government.

Encik Ghafar said the mandate given by the people in the recent general election was proof of their strong support for the Government.

He assured the people that the Government would keep its promises to the people in the implementation of the various policies.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that Umno, through the party Supreme Council, had always checked on the implementation of policies to ensure that they were properly carried out.

"If one-third of the Council members opted for an emergency meeting to be called over any issue, then it should be convened.

"However, in my 30 years in Umno, there has never been an occasion where one third of the members called for an emergency meeting. This means that the members are satisfied with the decisions made at the Council meetings," he said.

Encik Ghafar called on all Umno members to renew their pledge to consolidate party strength and strive for the benefit of the future generations.

"Let us not harbour hatred among one another as this will only be detrimental to our children's well being and the future," he said.

Encik Ghafar expressed the hope that those who wished to see continuous prosperity, progress and unity would support Umno.