

Dr M: Don't let them split Umno

'THE PARTY IS OUR HERITAGE AND MUST SURVIVE'

By NURAINA SAMAD

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Umno members not to allow the selfish and greedy few among them to split the party.

"This is our party and Umno is our only hope of ensuring that our struggle continues.

"We have no right to split our party. Umno is our heritage and we must continue to survive for the sake of our children and grandchildren," the Prime Minister said at the joint opening the seven Federal Territory Umno divisions' delegates' conference here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Umno president, said the party is the machinery for the Malays to achieve their objectives and to better their lot.

He said Umno had benefited

the Malays and had given meaning to independence.

It must, therefore, continue to survive as a strong and united party.

Dr Mahathir said the spirit of Umno called for members to be united and to be loyal to the party.

Umno could not hope to be strong if there were among the members those who discredited the leader just to gain positions.

Smear campaign

Dr Mahathir said Umno would lose its credibility as the leader of the Government if its own members persistently hurled slander against the party leadership.

"Certainly, when we hit out at the policies we formulated together, no one will then trust us anymore.

"Consequently, we can no longer be a strong and effec-

tive ruling party that can provide development and benefits for the people."

Dr Mahathir said in any election, there was bound to be some change but stressed that no one could determine who should remain and who should not.

"Of course, there must be change. The time will come for that. We can make our choice. But let us do it in the true family spirit. Let us not malign one another."

Dr Mahathir also endorsed the candidacy of Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba for the deputy presidency. He felt it would be more practical to have a party deputy president who is also the Deputy Prime Minister.

He said it would be difficult if the incumbent deputy president (Datuk Musa Hitam) remained.

He also expressed concern that the unhealthy nature of the election campaign being

carried out now would become normal practice.

"Every three years we have our party elections and every five years, a general election. What will happen when we have our party elections just before the general election?

"Possibly, the slander and smear campaign will spill over to the general election. And it will be difficult for us to tell the people to accept us as the rightful leaders."

Dr Mahathir said it was unfortunate that certain leaders were discrediting the Government under his leadership. He expressed regret that he had been looked upon as an "obstacle" to the ambition of certain leaders.

"Because of a few who want to become Prime Ministers, I now look ugly to them. Let us not change our horse in the middle of a swift-flowing stream, for we will surely be swept away by the current."