

Dr M: I will go if my services are not required

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IPOH, Sun. — Umno president Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad said today he is ready to step down if he feels his leadership is no longer needed by party members.

He, however, said he would not give up without a fight as he is concerned about the welfare and future of the party which has about 1.4 million members — the largest organisation in the country.

"That is why I have come here even though I was not invited to attend this gathering," the Prime Minister said when addressing the Umno Tambun divisional conference held at the Islamic Complex here today.

He said party members should not be surprised by his sudden visits as recent developments in the party had prompted him to act.

"At first, I did not intend to do any campaigning as I regard the coming party elections as a family matter which would not cause any bad happenings," he said.

"But, now there are cliques and camps. I really feel sad about this," he said.

Power

The Prime Minister hoped party members would revert to the traditional way of choosing leaders as this had been proven to be the best course to ensure solidarity within the party.

"We have our own *adat* (tradition) which should be upheld though no one can be punished for breaking it unlike laws where one can be punished," he said.

"Democracy has flourished because of this but there are limits, unlike what is existing in Western countries.

"There, a person can run naked and nobody would care as he has his right to do whatever he feels," he said.

He said democracy allows the election of party leaders but this should not be misused.

"There will be disorder in the party if one misuses his power," he said.

Dr Mahathir also appealed to party members not to overboard with criticisms of the present leadership.

"No leader can be effective if he is often criticised," he said.