

# PM treats Press to a no-holds- barred session

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Tues.** — The Prime Minister treated reporters to a no-holds-barred ("I'll answer all questions") interview today.

A heavy work schedule (especially now with the Umno elections just weeks away) plus uncompromising bodyguards, normally made it difficult for reporters to interview — let alone chit-chat — with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Invited by the Prime Minister to a guest room at the Putra World Trade Centre, the reporters suddenly found themselves crowding him and shooting all sorts of questions — political, economic and even personal ones.

And the Prime Minister replied to all of them.

There were questions about the Datuk Musa-Tengku Razaleigh election pact, accusations that he (Dr Mahathir) was a dictator, that he controlled the information media, that he would retire a year after the party election.

On the accusation that he was a dictator, he said: "Compared to Marcos, I have not killed anyone, have I?"

He said the issue had suddenly cropped up because of the election and because some people sought personal gains.

"They say I make decisions at the Supreme Council. It is a five or six-hour meeting. You mean I speak alone. I must be a good talker."

If he was a dictator, then "it must be the signs of a good dictator".

He said when he wrote his *Malay Dilemma*, it was banned. "Today I don't ban books written against me".

The Prime Minister was shocked to hear the host of accusations being thrown against him during the election campaign.

"At first, I had no desire to talk because I thought it is unbecoming for anyone to criticise others. But they want to win. They don't care what damage they do, so I am forced to speak."

He was clearly angry with those who planned to oust him as party president.

"If they want to become presidents, they should form their own party. They can have 1,000 parties with 2,000 presidents".

He was also asked about six Ministers who were said to have voiced their readiness to face whatever consequences if the candidates they supported lost.

"Tell me who they are", and after being named one after another by the reporters, he said: "They did not say it personally. Only Datuk Rais (Yatim) said so."

"He (Datuk Rais) is being brave. I appreciate his action".

The Prime Minister went on to reply to questions about the economy, Sabah issue and about the nomination of candidates for the party election.

"Any more questions? Okay, thank you," he said as he stood up and left for lunch.