

PM: STABILITY IN COUNTRY DUE TO UMNO

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ALOR STAR, Sat. — The present calm in the country is due to stability in Umno, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Umno had been playing a vital role in the country in terms of co-operation with other political parties in ruling the country since the days of the Alliance. Hence, any fighting among its leaders would affect the image of the country.

"Stability of the country is vital as this will attract investments.

"If the country is not stable it will lose credibility in the eyes of others and we will have to face various problems in building the confidence of outside people in Malaysia as a place for them to invest," the Prime Minister pointed out.

Speaking at the opening of the

Kedah Umno Convention at Bangunan Tunku today, Dr Mahathir said current developments in Umno had affected the credibility of the country to some extent.

"Many people are asking what will happen after the April 24 Umno elections."

Dr Mahathir said no one could question the role played by Umno in ensuring the stability of the country.

The importance of Umno was not in terms of its size but of the special calmness with which its members and leaders adhered to party traditions.

Former party presidents were not challenged or forced to leave and those holding the deputy president's post waited for years for their turn to become Prime Minister.

"Umno was small when it was set up 41 years ago but this tradition is retained except during

the time of Datuk Onn Jaafar when his idea of opening Umno to all races could not be accepted by other Umno leaders then.

Datuk Onn's threat to quit the party did not change the decision of the other leaders and they chose Tunku Abdul Rahman to take over the president's post. Datuk Onn left the party to form Parti Negara.

Dr Mahathir said the time when Tun Hussein Onn was challenged by Sulaiman Palestine could not be considered a challenge to the presidency, as it was only just to test Tun Hussein's support.

Dr Mahathir said he himself, when he was Deputy Prime Minister, did not see eye to eye with Tun Hussein over several issues.

"But I always told the rakyat wherever I went that Tun Hussein was a true Umno leader," he added.

Malaysians should be thankful that there were no riots like those experienced in other smaller countries which had gained independence earlier than Malaysia.

Though the possibility of such disturbances were there due to our multi-racial population, the Government had been able to avoid them.

In fact, growth was more rapid after the 1969 tragedy and the relationship between the races became closer.

"Visiting MPs from Britain were amazed and asked me how Malaysia was so peaceful when there were 13 political parties in the BN," the Prime Minister said.

"Although there were threats from the Communists who tried to use arms to topple the Government, their activities have now been restricted by security forces," he added.