

Dr M on why he spoke out against allegations

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ALOR STAR, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was forced to counter allegations made against him by certain Umno leaders, or party members will believe the allegations are true.

Dr Mahathir who is also Umno president, said certain people had gone to the extent of making up stories that his wife was against his decision to seek re-election for the presidency.

"Because I firmly said I wanted to contest, my wife allegedly felt hurt and took off to Japan," he told more than 1,000 Umno supporters at the opening of the Kedah Umno convention today.

Dr Mahathir also quashed allegations that he intended to pick Umno Youth leader Anwar Ibrahim as his deputy, saying the party had a say over such a decision.

He said he was not trying to create a dynasty and bring in relatives to hold important posts.

Allegations were also made that he was responsible for the Kampung Memali tragedy when it was clear that the matter was in the hands of the Home Affairs Ministry.

"It so happened that I was going on a tour to China and the tragedy had claimed lives."

He said many dissatisfied party leaders were making allegations against him and the Government because of the coming party elections.

Service records

Umno members should remain calm and candidates vying for posts should go by their service records.

"It is unnecessary to throw allegations as people, especially Umno members, know what we have done."

He said Umno gave freedom to its members to voice views and they could do so either at party conventions, general assemblies or at the supreme council.

Being an open party, it had been decided that conventions be held to give opportunities for members who were not given a chance to speak during general assemblies where time was limited.

More issues and problems at State and national levels could be discussed and later brought to the attention of the higher ranks in the party.

Dr Mahathir said many opportunities were given during supreme council meetings for any dissatisfaction to be voiced against implementation of policies like the "Look East" policy. The decisions are taken by majority vote.

"But now there are people who are dissatisfied."

Dr Mahathir said it would be a lie if members of the Council said they had not been given a chance to speak up.

"Meetings are held for hours and I cannot be talking alone all that time.

"All supreme council members were given a chance to speak when Datuk Musa resigned," he said.

On the Umno deputy president post, Dr Mahathir said he campaigned for Encik Ghafar Baba as he wanted to have a deputy who could work closely and co-operate with him, and the party constitution said a deputy president must help the president.

It was regrettable that certain Umno leaders in Johore had accused Encik Ghafar of being incapable of carrying out his duties due to his age and that he could not perform duties at international events.

"Encik Ghafar was chosen on merit and his 25 years of experience is enough to make him deputy president."