

Dr M is not weak or soft: Ghafar

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's unwillingness to sack Ministers who oppose Government policies should not be taken as an indication the Prime Minister is too soft or too weak.

Deputy Prime Minister Encik Abdul Ghafar Baba said that Dr Mahathir had not acted against them because he wanted to show that he is tolerant and liberal.

"If he sacks any of the Ministers, he will certainly be accused of being a dictator," Encik Ghafar said in an interview with *Merdeka*, Umno's official organ.

He said he was moved by the unnecessary problems the Umno president had to bear.

In any country, he said, members of the Cabinet must be united and practise collec-

tive responsibility and those who disagreed with Cabinet decision were free to step down.

"Today people are puzzled with what is happening to our Ministers. The various embassies must be laughing at us," he said.

Encik Ghafar, who is contesting the deputy president's post, said that in other countries there were Prime Ministers who sacked their Ministers who disagreed with the Cabinet.

He expressed regret that there were people in Umno today who struggled only for self-interest.

"This attitude must be eradicated. After the party election, Umno members, especially the new ones, should be given re-orientation courses so that they understand the

party's true concept of struggle," he said.

Encik Ghafar, who is Umno vice-president, said that the members must be reminded that the Malays could progress only if Umno was strong.

He believed by the year 2,000 the Malays could compete with other races economically.

The Deputy Prime Minister advised the delegates and observers attending the party general assembly to maintain discipline so that the party and the Malays would not be ridiculed by others.

He said Umno constitution did not stop anyone from contesting for any post in the party but such freedom should not be abused to cause chaos.

"Leaders who rise with the support of the people will last for a long time," he said.

He said there were those who agreed with the Government's decisions when they were in the Cabinet but opposed them when they left it.

"There are also those who sit in the Cabinet but oppose the Prime Minister," he added.

Former Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Musa Hitam, who is defending the deputy presidency, advised the delegates to be careful in choosing the party leadership.

"To me, winning or losing is not important. The question is how a person accepts his victory or defeat after the decision is made," he added.

Datuk Musa was confident that those contesting the various posts would accept the decisions within the family, in a spirit of goodwill and understanding.