

Dr M: Loyalty to me not criterion for Cabinet appointment

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said loyalty to him has never been among the criteria for his choice of Cabinet ministers. He looks for people who are capable and can do their work.

This, he added, was evident from his past record in that he had also picked people who were disloyal to him.

He stressed that nowhere in any of the two oaths taken by ministers is there mention of loyalty to the Prime Minister.

In his winding up speech at the 38th Umno general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, read out the two oaths that ministers have to take. One is the oath of secrecy and the other is that of office and loyalty.

He said in forming a government there are rules and regulations that need to be followed. The question of an individual giving his or her loyalty to the prime minister does not arise.

Asked at a news conference later as to when he will announce his new Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said that he did not have a time table and that he was free to choose his Cabinet ministers.

Asked whether he had planned to ask the entire Cabinet to resign so that he will have a free hand to choose new members, he said that he had no such plan.

Dr Mahathir who was elected Umno president for the third term, beating Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who posed the most serious challenge to the post in Umno's 40-year history, expressed confidence that the party is still solid and not split as some had forecast.

On the possible effects of the contest on the party, Dr Mahathir said in any contest there will be losers and there will be winners. He said in offering oneself for a contest the individual knows the risks. He must be aware that if he wins he gets something but if he loses he does not gain.

"I was aware and accepted right

from the beginning that if I lose I will not be able to stay in Sri Perdana it being unlikely that I would be the Prime Minister."

In his winding up speech Dr Mahathir also touched on the general elections and the methods and process used in selecting candidates for the various constituencies, Islamisation and party unity.

He congratulated the winners and expressed satisfaction that there were no untoward incidents during the elections and the general assembly.

On the disclosure of some official secrets to the public Dr Mahathir explained that this was done to correct the picture given to the public as to what went on when the decisions on certain issues were made and who participated in these decisions.

He does not believe that the contest for the party posts and the fierce campaign ensuing had in any way affected the image of the country abroad.

On the close results (he won by 43 votes), Dr Mahathir said the figures in themselves do not show the whole picture. He added that these figures do not show how the whole party or all the 1.4 million members of the party felt. As such the figures should not be taken or seen in isolation.

On party tradition, Dr Mahathir said it has been broken and added that there is "always a first time". It does not mean that if in the past there was no contest there will not be any in the future.

The party tradition has been to have a contest when there is a vacancy but this was broken by Tengku Razaleigh challenging Datuk Musa Hitam for the deputy president's post in 1984. Dr Mahathir said tradition was not broken in 1981 as the post then was vacant.

Dr Mahathir also said the practice in some countries where a Cabinet

Cont'd Back Page. Col. 6

Dr M: Loyalty not criterion

FROM PAGE ONE

member who unsuccessfully challenges his party chief is required to resign should be introduced in Malaysia.

"It should be that way, but it is not so here. What am I to do?" he added.

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Dr Mahathir was asked whether such a practice should be applied here in view of the fact that a member of his Cabinet had challenged him for the party leadership.

He declined to reply when asked if he would retain Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh in the Cabinet.