

Umno members must close ranks, says Dr M

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LABUAN, Fri. — Prime Minister ~~Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ today urged Umno members to close ranks and re-unite.

"There is no longer any Team A or Team B. There is only the Umno team," he said at a gathering of about 100 Labuan Umno division and branch leaders here.

Dr Mahathir, the Umno president, expressed regret over the disunity in the party following the April polls.

There are still members who refuse to accept the outcome of the elections and some are even prepared to take court action to challenge the results, he said.

These members, he said, did not have the spirit of Umno.

Dr Mahathir said it was pointless for a political party to have many members when it was weak because of disunity.

The Prime Minister said problems within Umno, which

now has 1.4 million members, should be resolved through the various party channels, such as the supreme council, liaison committees or divisions.

He hoped there would be no campaigning for top party posts in future Umno elections.

Campaigning, he pointed out, might lead to dirty tactics, including corruption.

"With corruption, a person can become an item of trade and consequently, the party itself could be traded to others," he said.

"If Umno is traded away, it will lose its power. Once power is lost, it will be difficult to regain it, as happened in Sabah when Muslims who were in power at one time did not use it well," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he had received many complaints about harassment of Muslims in Sabah "but these are only allegations and it shows what happens when

power is lost."

He said Umno wanted to remain in power and be fair to the people. He assured that it would not misuse power for personal interests.

The Prime Minister hoped all Umno members, particularly those in Labuan, will understand the philosophy and objectives of Umno and adhere by its regulations.

Dr Mahathir later held a closed-door meeting with Labuan Barisan Nasional leaders.

Speaking to reporters subsequently, he said he explained the concept of the BN and the need for the leaders to reduce friction among themselves.

He said they should not be hasty in making statements which might hurt the feelings of their BN colleagues.

Dr Mahathir also said he would look into problems pertaining to the administration of Labuan, as raised by Labuan BN during the meeting.