

Mahathir: We'll fight to the end

(P)

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Umno Baru president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the party will "fight to the end" against those seeking to destroy it.

He said such "irresponsible people" were using the courts to weaken the party.

"They are merely out to seek personal interests rather than the interests of the Malays and the nation," he said at a ceremony to receive 187,381 membership application forms from the Umno

Baru Youth here today.

The Prime Minister said the party was also prepared to go to the courts to fight such people.

"We will not keep quiet against those who are out to weaken us. We will fight to the end," he said.

"We need to remain strong. If Umno is weak, the Government will be weak.

"The Government is dependent on a strong Umno. If there is no Umno, it is quite difficult for other component parties of Barisan Nasional to work together," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the party now had 931,361 registered members — 743,980 registered by the divisions and the remaining through campaigns organised by Umno Youth. Only a small number were not members of the old Umno, he added.

He said the total was more than half the 1.2 million membership before the Umno general assembly on April 24, 1987.

"With the total we have now, we have the right to claim the estate owned by Umno because our membership has more than exceeded half the previous party membership," he said.

He also directed Umno Youth to continue with the recruitment.

Dr Mahathir said he was proud that Umno Youth had succeeded in recruiting many members within three weeks although it had originally pledged only 130,000 members.

He said this proved that the Malays, particularly at grassroots level, still loved Umno.

The problems were brought about only by people on top, he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were people who were previously not Umno members but were now interested in joining Umno.

"This is a new phenomenon and we can be proud of it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the party need not use the word *Baru* as the party constitution which was approved by the Registrar of Societies did not carry the word.

"A certain group had successfully filed an injunction in the court to stop some newspapers from dropping the word *Baru*.

"From now on, we call the party Umno. It is not that we want to run down the courts but this is a political field where the people's emotion must be taken into consideration," he added.