

Dr M: Aid to Indian community normal thing

Government not involved

BY HO KAY TAT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Government assistance to the Indian community has nothing to do with the MIC presidential election, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister stressed that Umno and the Government were not involved in the MIC election.

Dr Mahathir said Government assistance to the Indian community was normal and it was mere coincidence if the aid was given now.

"Sometimes, Government aid is attributed to the success of this leader or that leader.

Normal aid

"For example, the Government is going to give some assistance to the MIC to set up a college in Seremban.

"This is a normal aid which we are approving, but we cannot do anything if the MIC wants to link it to the party election.

"It is coincidental that we are giving the assistance and this has nothing to do with the MIC election," said Dr Mahathir who is Umno president.

He said this at a Press conference after chairing a three-hour Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir was earlier asked his

reaction to the fact that he and Umno have been dragged into the MIC presidential election campaign.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu is being challenged by his deputy Datuk S. Subramaniam and 13 others. The election will be held on Oct 15.

As to whether he will ask the MIC leaders to stop linking Government

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assistance to the election, Dr Mahathir said: "This sort of things happen even during Umno elections, so how can I ask others not to do it.

"This also happens in general elections, and there is no way I can stop it."

On the supreme council meeting, Dr Mahathir said it was mainly a "house-keeping" exercise to tidy up the party machinery.

He said among the matters discussed was the problem of bankrupt members being elected to party posts, which he described as a complicated matter involving a lot of laws.

Dr Mahathir said that preparations for the party general assembly on Nov 16 were being made and two or three divisions have been asked to hold fresh elections before the assembly.

The main issues to be debated at the assembly will be the economy, the New Economic Policy and Malay affairs.

On whether the Umno constitution will be amended during the assembly to make it similar to the original constitution, Dr Mahathir said: "What is the original constitution? Since 1946, the constitution has been changed 10 times."

The Prime Minister said Umno would comply with the Election Commission's decision not to allow political parties to take part in voter registration exercises.