

Naming successor will not guarantee unity

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By Syed Nadzri

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Umno president **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said naming his successor would not guarantee greater unity in the party.

In fact, said the Prime Minister in response to a question by the Press, such a move might even split the members.

Speaking at a Press conference at the end of the second day of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here today, Dr Mahathir said he could not ask party members to be united and that he could only advise them.

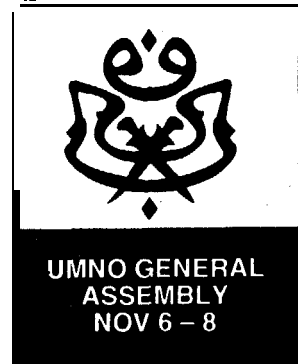
The Prime Minister was asked why the question of unity kept cropping up during the assembly and whether a drastic action, like naming a successor, would ensure unity among members.

"We cannot force the people to be united. We can only advise them on how they can achieve greater unity," said the Prime Minister.

He added that his reference to unity did not mean there was no unity in the party.

"There is unity but it could be better," said the Umno chief who made party unity one of the key points in yesterday's opening address.

On the circulation of poison-pen letters, which Dr Mahathir raised in his speech and was hotly debated today, the Prime Minister advised Umno members who had copies of the letters to hand them to the police to



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facilitate investigations as suggested by the **Inspector-General of Police**, Tan Sri Haniff Omar.

Asked whether Umno would act against those responsible for producing and circulating the letters, Dr Mahathir said that would only be decided after the police had completed their investigations.

To a question on whether Umno would consider setting up a bureau on **solidari-**

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Dr M: We must respect the rules

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ty to ensure greater unity in the party as proposed during today's debate, Dr Mahathir said it would be considered.

He said such a move, however, would not necessarily guarantee that friction would not occur among some members.

"What is important is for the members to adopt teamwork. Sometimes there are people who are greedy. Under such circumstances, establishing such a bureau will not be of much help," he said.

On his meeting with representatives of Sabah Umno this afternoon, Dr Mahathir said it was to discuss the party's stand on certain issues since some party members were now non-Muslims.

Asked about the outburst by Senator Datuk Azman Attar Othman during the debate on the presidential

address this morning, Dr Mahathir said he was saddened by the incident.

"Though we may not like a certain ruling by the permanent chairman, we have to respect it. Otherwise the meeting cannot proceed smoothly," he said.

The Prime Minister, however, said at such an incident had occurred before.

"There have been instances where even some supreme council members were called bloody fools," he said.

On the publication of books on the country's politics during the assembly, he said the writers were those who had no principles but were merely out to make profits.

When asked whether the books could be banned, he said it could not be done unless their contents threatened security.

"We are democratic though the foreign Press do not believe so," he said.