

I won't name successor: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that he will not name his successor but will leave the decision to Umno members.

The party president said that merely naming his successor would not reduce politicking and ensure party unity.

In fact, he said, it might even split the party at a time when it was striving to forge unity among the leaders and ranks.

The Prime Minister said

such an action was also very undemocratic.

"In our system, it is the members who indicate the person of their choice and we will leave it to them," he told a press conference at the end of the second day of the Umno general assembly.

Dr Mahathir was responding to complaints of unhealthy campaign trends and dirty tactics being used in the run-up to the party election next year.

He said although he had

touched on party unity at length in his presidential address, it did not mean that there was no unity in Umno now.

"There is unity but it could be better. You cannot force the people to unite. We can only appeal and reason with them and if they appreciate the need, they will unite," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Umno would study a suggestion made at the assembly that a unity bureau be set up.

However, he felt that it would not guarantee unity, saying such a bureau would be pointless in a situation that existed in the party during the 1987 crisis.

It was more important, he said, to make members realise the tradition of co-operation within Umno, adding that at times, it was the selfish and greedy members who caused division.

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Poison-pen

source not known

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On poison-pen letters, which have been blamed for creating suspicion and friction in Umno, Dr Mahathir said it was not known if the letters were circulated by Umno members or the party's enemies.

He said there was nothing the leadership could do unless the members themselves realise the intentions of those circulating the letters.

"But if Umno members say there is some truth in the contents and such letters can be taken as a form of advice, then there is no point for them to look to the supreme council for advice," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he had directed Umno leaders and ministers who had received poison-pen letters to surrender them to the police, as suggested by the Inspector-General of Police.

He also expressed regret that FT delegate Datuk Azman Attar Osman had criticised the permanent chairman when he was asked to cut his speech short, adding that members must respect rules.