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Mahathir-successor

GHAFAR TO SUCCEED MAHATHIR, "ARTY TO DECIDE SUCCESSOR AFTER THAT

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 8, (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that going by party tradition deputy president Ghafar Baba will succeed him and that the party will have to decide on the subsequent successor.

+It is Umno tradition that the man who holds the second post -- the deputy presidency -- succeeds the president, and that is the way I think it should be,+ the Prime Minister said.

The jockeying was not for the deputy president's post but for the three posts of vice-president and he would not name the successor because it would not contribute to the betterment of the party, he told a news conference at the end of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He was responding to a question on whether there was a change in his stand on the succession in Umno with regard to a statement he made yesterday that he would let the party members decide on his successor.

Asked whether that would mean the present status quo would remain in the interest of the party, Dr Mahathir said: +It is not, for me to say because as far as I am concerned, the next man is of course the deputy but after that, it is up to the party to decide.+ -- more

▼08/11/20-07MST

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Asked whether he was making himself available for another one or two terms as the Umno president, Dr Mahathir said he was duty bound to offer himself if needed by the party.

+I would not know about two more terms but if I am still healthy and the party still wants me I think it is a duty for me to offer myself. If the party does not want, me that is quite all right,+ he said.

Ghafar, who was also at the press conference, declined to comment on Dr Mahathir's statement.

+He has no reaction,+ said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that what he had stressed to the delegates on the need to reduce politicking in the party would have some effect in moderating the unhealthy kind of campaigning within Umno.

+Something to do with perhaps the use of money, the use of influence or the use of government facilities for one's own ambition,+ he said. -- more

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To a question on who should fill the deputy's post should there be a change in the number one post, the Prime Minister said it would be up to the successor to determine his own deputy.

+As you know, when I was chosen to be the deputy, I was not the most popular candidate, but Datuk (Tun) Hussein (then the Umno president) decided and that was for him to decide, we do not question him.

+I am not going to put in any condition on my successor,+ he added.

However, he said, the most important thing was that the successors should continue with the party's aim towards achieving the target that had been set without making major changes.

+We may have some minor shifts but generally we should be going in the same direction if we want to achieve the target; of Vision 2020 (of making the country a developed nation),+ he added.

Dr Mahathir said all party posts were open for contest but the elections should be conducted in an orderly manner. -- Bernama

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