

Dr M turns the tables on Kit Siang

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad turned the tables on Opposition leader and DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang during an exchange over succession within Umno and the DAP in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Accused by Lim of being a dictator, the Prime Minister countered by saying that Umno had seen five presidents since its inception while the DAP had never changed its secretary-general.

To thumping of tables by Barisan Nasional backbenchers, Dr Mahathir said he had been challenged before and had emerged the victor.

"Lim has never been challenged before. Anybody who even thinks of challenging

him would see the end of his political career," Dr Mahathir said.

He also added that people like Fan Yew Teng and Lee Lam Thye had been the victims.

Lim had accused Dr Mahathir of being a dictator during the debate on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993. He also pointed at several senior Umno leaders and said that they could take over the Prime Minister's post.

Earlier, Lim was interrupted by Dominic Puthucheary (BN-Nibong Tebal) who wanted a clarification on whether the Dewan Rakyat needed the consent of the Conference of Rulers to table the Bill in Parliament.

The Opposition leader replied: "If I am not wrong, as

a lawyer you should know the Federal Constitution. Go back and read the Federal Constitution."

Turning to Dr Mahathir, Lim said the Barisan Nasional should lecture its MPs on the Federal Constitution.

At this juncture, Dr Mahathir told Lim that "a lawyer yourself, with no other job... becomes an Opposition leader".

He added that if Karpal Singh (DAP-Jelutong) wanted legal advice, he would not come to you (Lim).

Dr Mahathir said Karpal was much more at ease during Lim's absence from Parliament last year.

"Change the DAP leadership... MP for Jelutong... you are qualified," the Prime Minister said.

Later, replying to points raised by DAP MP for Kota Melaka Lim Guan Eng, Dr Mahathir said the DAP should be thankful to the Barisan Nasional for introducing the Bill.

The Prime Minister said the Opposition should appreciate the problems which the Government had to go through with the Rulers in getting them to finally consent to the Bill.

He said if the Government had adopted the DAP's approach to the issue, the amendments would never have been tabled in Parliament.

Dr Mahathir said this after Lim Guan Eng explained the DAP's rationale for not supporting the Bill during the special sitting of the House last January.