

# LEADERS VOW TO PRESERVE UNITY

## Party hopefuls to check emotions in campaigns

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Umno leaders have pledged that their campaigns for key positions in the coming elections will not affect party unity.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the supreme council which met yesterday felt that the political situation in the party was not in a "turmoil" as perceived.

Dr Mahathir said: "Party leaders believe they can control their emotions (in their campaigning) and they will ensure that unity is maintained despite the elections."

He said the preparations for the elections were among several matters discussed during the three-hour meeting.

The Prime Minister reiterated that he could only advise members not to contest for the deputy president's post.

"I cannot advise people not to contest against me but I thought for the number two post, if there is no contest, it will be better for the party," he added.

"This is because the tradition is that there is usually no contest (for the deputy president's post) but the party constitution allows contest."

Dr Mahathir was asked whether he still maintained

that the top two posts should not be contested.

On an earlier statement by Rarisan Rackbenchers Club president Shahidan Kassim that 35 of the 38 Umno MPs would support Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim's nomination for deputy president, he said: "We feel that a body outside Umno should not be involved in the elections."

Dr Mahathir also declined to comment on the motion to discuss a vote of no-confidence against Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba, which was tabled by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang and subsequently rejected by the Dewan Rakyat.

He said it was up to Lim to say what he wanted and added that he (Lim) would always say the Government was undemocratic.

"He speaks when he feels like speaking. After speaking he will say the country is undemocratic. In an undemocratic country, he could be arrested," he added.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said Ghafar had not expressed his intention to resign from either his Cabinet or party post.

Asked why Ghafar was absent from the press conference, Dr Mahathir said Ghafar attended the supreme council meeting but had excused himself because he had business to attend to.