

Stop money politics, Dr M advises Umno

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called for a stop to the increasing practice of money politics in the jockeying for positions by party members.

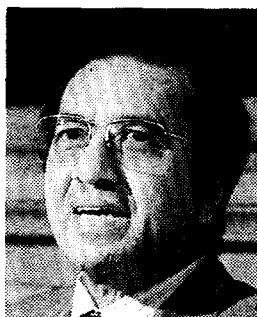
In an apparent move to prevent the party election campaign from becoming overheated, he also advised candidates against holding large gatherings.

The Prime Minister urged all sides to refrain from using money politics in their campaigning.

"Money politics in this country is not too serious yet but it can become serious. All diseases start from small, it's like a thin wedge, it will increase," he told newsmen after opening the First National Competitiveness Forum jointly organised by the Malaysian Business Council and the International Trade and Industry Ministry here yesterday.

Describing the practice as unhealthy, he said the trend was not as serious as that of other countries where it had forced a change in government.

The use of money, he said, had no end because if one gave RM10, another



Dr Mahathir ... described the practice as unhealthy

would give RM11 and if one party gave RM12, another would give RM20.

Dr Mahathir said the leadership could only try to advise members to stop such a practice as Umno did not have an anti-corruption agency.

"Sometimes we expose it so that Umno members would not respond to money politics," he said, adding that the party had a disciplinary committee to keep a watch on the use of money to fish for votes.

He also questioned the necessity to hold large gatherings to canvass for votes, saying small functions were adequate.

"By holding big gatherings, money needs to be used. If there is no money, how is it possible to hold a big gathering?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir also said candidates should not use government machinery to defend their positions in the party.

"We can use government machinery to defend the Government but not to campaign for any individual in the Government," he added.

The Prime Minister was responding to reports that Community Development Department (Kemas) and National Civics Bureau (Biro Tatanegara) facilities had been used in the campaigning.

Allegations have been made by several Umno leaders on the purported interference of officers from these two bodies in the campaign.

Last week supporters of Umno deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba held a gathering, attended by about 10,000 people, at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Those who spoke at the gathering were vice-presidents Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Pahang state executive councillor Datuk Adnan Yaakub and Gaya Umno division deputy chief Bandi Pilo, who represented Sabah Umno chief Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun.