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Mahathir-Anwar

DR MAHATHIR REITERATES NEUTRAL STAND

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug. 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reiterated his neutrality in the election for party deputy president in November and said his duty was to close ranks among members after the contest so as to maintain unity.

The Prime Minister said those contesting must conduct their campaign properly and avoid creating problems for Umno and the country and providing fuel to the opposition to bash Umno.

"My duty, if we are unable to avoid contest, is that after the results I have to close ranks of all Umno members. The vanquished and the victor must re-unite so that we can ensure Umno's continued strength," he told reporters after opening the Public Bank's Vision Park here.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, was asked to comment on Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's announcement today that he would run for the deputy president's post now held by Chafar Baba, the Deputy Prime Minister, in the party elections in November.

Anwar, one of three vice presidents, made the announcement at a press conference attended by Supreme Council members, state Umno leaders, Cabinet colleagues and division leaders. -- more

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When he was asked for his comments about Anwar's decision, he replied: "That's his decision."

He said Anwar had informed him about about it.

Dr Mahathir said there was no need for him to give his blessings to anyone to contest because he wanted to remain neutral.

To allegations by some quarters that his neutral stand in fact favoured Anwar, Dr Mahathir replied: "That's interpretation... anyone can make any kind of interpretation."

As to the suggestion by a number of Umno leaders, among them Menteri Besar and a Chief Minister, that Chafar make way for Anwar, Dr Mahathir said: "That is their view." -- Bernama

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