

PM: People free to interpret my statements

By STEPHEN THEN

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KEMAMAN: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the people were free to interpret his statements concerning the party elections.

"In a free country, the people can interpret what they want. I cannot control that. Sometimes, even the newspapers have their own slants," he said.

"When I say no they say it means yes and when I say yes they say it means no," the Prime Minister told reporters after opening the Pesama-MK Furniture Sdn Bhd in the Jakar Industrial Estate here.

Dr Mahathir was asked about the interpretations made about his statements and even his actions in view of the approaching party elections.

He said he had made known his stand very clearly concerning the contest for the deputy president's post.

"I have said that if possible, there should be no contest and that one of the candidates should withdraw.

"But if this is not possible, what can I do?" he asked.

Earlier, at the launch, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian workers must never resort to radical action such as strikes or pickets to demand higher wages

as this would only disrupt industrial harmony.

"Count your blessings. Malaysian workers are a lucky lot since they have so many chances of gaining employment in the country.

"Instead of them looking for jobs, the employers are the ones looking for them to fill vacancies," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was experiencing a zero unemployment rate.

"The latest figure of unemployment is 3.5 per cent but according to world statistics, this means there is no unemployment at all.

"The 3.5 per cent are in fact made up of those who choose not to work or those who prefer to do their own business."

Dr Mahathir said there were now about one million foreign workers in the country but this figure could be reduced if Malaysians were more prepared to fill those vacancies.

"Workers here have the privilege of choosing the job they want. This privilege is not available in most other countries," he said.

Present were Terengganu Mentri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Public Enterprises Minister Datuk Dr Yusof Nor.