

Advice was for division leaders, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad clarified recent reports which seem to give the impression that he had advised any candidate who thought he could not win in the elections to withdraw.

"I was talking about division leaders because there should not be too many candidates vying to be division chiefs including those who do not have the slightest chance of winning but still want to contest.

"I was also referring to myself when I said I did not intend to stay on until I am senile but before that please don't disturb me," he said in jest.

Asked if the Umno supreme council would meet to discuss ways to avert a contest for the deputy president's post

between incumbent Abdul Ghafar Baba and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Umno leadership to decide.

On an allegation that Sabah Umno delegates were prevented from nominating Ghafar for the deputy president's post, he said he had not received a clear report on the matter so far.

However, he said if the report was true, he was saddened and promise to take action on the matter.

Ghafar said on Sunday his supporters were not given the chance to propose his name during the divisional delegates meetings.

Thirteen of the 20 divisions in Sabah which have held their meetings nominated Anwar for the deputy presidency.

Dr Mahathir also said

candidates contesting in the Umno elections were justified to receive the 10 bonus points for each divisional nomination.

The reason for the 10-point bonus was to allow the candidates to benefit from each nomination they received.

"My experience came only in 1987 when I received 80 per cent of the total nominations but I won by only 43 votes.

"Sometimes when delegates arrive, their decision may be influenced by different factors or they may be bribed.

"We need to balance things up with the bonus points so that the candidate can enjoy the effect of his nomination," he told reporters after opening the 14th Commonwealth Forestry Conference at a hotel here.