


PM: Elect leaders who can do good for party

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JITRA, Thurs.  Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir ~~Mohamad~~ today advised all Umno members to choose leaders who could bring good to the party.

He said members should make their own judgment and assess whether the leaders they were going to elect in the November party elections could bring good to the party.

He advised them not to choose leaders merely because the leaders were in a position to give them licences or allocations.

"If the leaders could bring good to the party, we should support him," Dr Mahathir said when opening the Kubang Pasu Umno divisional delegates' meeting at Dewan Jitra here today.

He said: "When we cast our votes, we must think properly ... whether the person we choose could bring good to the party.

"I have no other advice except that we think about our party. I support the party ... I do not support anyone.

"It is up to the party members to decide but it must be in the interest of the party," he added.

Dr Mahathir also advised Umno members not to be obsessed with certain leaders to the extent of deviating from the party's actual struggles.

The Prime Minister, who is also the Kubang Pasu division chief, said many had wanted to know who he would be supporting in the party elections.

"I side only one and I want all members to vote for this ... I side Umno," he told the packed hall of 1,000 people who included party members from other divisions.

"For me, people are not important, Umno is important ... we need Umno.

"I do not support anyone and I do not reject anyone," he added.

The party president reminded the members that

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Role for everyone in Umno, says Dr M

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everyone in the party had a role to play.

"Be they old or young, man or woman, each of them has a role in the party. We cannot say women are more important to the party ... their votes alone could not assure Umno's victory without the support from the men.

"We have young and old in the party. We cannot say who is more important than the other. The old is also important to the party.

"The young must remember that they will get old one day. So they cannot say the old has no role because when we are old we too want to have a role ... (in the party)," said Dr Mahathir.

In Umno, there should be strong co-operation between the old and young, he said.

"The most important thing now is for Umno to remain forever strong."

Dr Mahathir said the members must realise that they were not struggling for leaders like him, Tun Hussein Onn or Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj but for the party.

"Our priority should be Umno. If we choose certain

leaders because of other reasons, then we are deviating from the party struggles."

Dr Mahathir said when former leaders Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Datuk Musa Hitam contested against him and deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba in 1987, the two challengers set aside the party's interest and shifted their priority to personal interest to the extent of eventually taking the party to court.

▲ He said Umno was formed not for certain people to be the president or the deputy president.

Dr Mahathir reminded the members that they should not indulge in activities detrimental to the party.

"If we expose our own weaknesses to the extent that the Opposition could use them against us, then it will not benefit us," he added.

Dr Mahathir also recalled the time when Tengku Razaleigh contested against Musa for the deputy president's post.

"I told Musa that the winner will not take all, and that the loser will not lose all too.

"But when Musa won, he wanted everything. Al-

though Razaleigh lost, he was an Umno member and that's why I retained him as the Finance Minister and the party treasurer.

"In the second contest, I advised Razaleigh not to fight but he did not listen and Musa was not satisfied. Although Razaleigh lost, I did not discard him but made him the Trade and Industry Minister, a drop in rank," he added.

"But Musa resigned, probably unhappy with my decision. When he resigned, it's a bit difficult for him to get back in," he added.

Dr Mahathir said in a contest, there would be a place for the winner or the loser.

"For those who win and lose, there are still places for them ... but a bit lower place for those who lose," he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded the members that only a leader with full support could work effectively. Otherwise, he could not perform well.

He expressed his fear that certain people would try to declare the Umno assembly invalid by taking it to the court.

He also feared the attitude of certain members who place the selection of delegates to the general assem-

bly in Kuala Lumpur as more important than the election of party leaders.

"Some members thought being delegates is more important as they could 'sell' their votes."

Dr Mahathir also said he found it difficult to issue statements because on many occasions they were misinterpreted as being supportive of certain people.

"This year, I find it hard to deliver speeches because they have been misinterpreted or partly reported.

"When it is partly reported, it will give a different meaning. When I deliver a speech, sometimes the newspapers just report a part of it, giving it a different meaning.

"That makes me a bit worried about talking because I fear it will be misinterpreted.

"When I said I am neutral, it was misinterpreted as being supportive of a certain leader.

"When I say 'no comment', it was also misinterpreted as supporting certain people.

"Some even tried to read my facial expression. This is the problem when people start reading what is in your heart," he added.