

Dr M: A divided Umno may weaken Government

JOHOR BARU: A split in Umno caused by election rivalry will be too costly as it could weaken the Government, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned yesterday.

He said party members should remember Umno matters above all else.

"No leader is permanent. They come and go when it is time. In 1987, we got carried away when we placed personalities on top and not the party. Then, we wanted personalities to win although it damaged the party.

"We are in Umno because of the party. The party is the only platform which strives for us. So, personalities are not more important... whether it is Dr Mahathir

or Tan Sri Muhyiddin (Yassin).

"We must bring about an awareness where members give priority to leadership, but not to an extent where the party is split because one or two people did not get a place," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a weakened Umno could undermine the effectiveness of the Government as the party is the main pillar in Barisan Nasional.

He warned members that a weak Government would not be able to govern effectively and the country would lose its dignity among other nations which now regard it as an example of unity.

He said party members must bury their differ-

ences and unite after elections to ensure that Umno and the Barisan Government remain robust pillars of harmony and stability for the multi-racial community.

Dr Mahathir said he would work hard to unite the party after the November elections.

He promised to do his best to bring all sides together and prevent bitter groups from taking drastic measures like joining opposition parties.

Dr Mahathir said Umno is today treasured not only by the Malays but even non-Malays respect the party and are watching developments closely because "whatever happens has an effect on them as well."