

PM: I DON'T FAVOUR TEAMS

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has rejected the team approach and money politics in the Umno elections.

The party president stressed that he was neutral and did not favour any particular team.

He said in the run-up to the elections, untoward incidents had happened, and he had received reports of money being used.

He said there were also reports of delegates being held hostage at certain places.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a press conference after a meeting with division heads at the Putra World Trade Centre prior to the party general assembly.

The Youth and Wanita wings will elect their leaders today. The elections for the supreme council will be held on Thursday when the three-day general assembly starts (see Page 2).

The campaign this year, Dr Mahathir admitted, had become more intense but he had advised delegates not to allow the campaign to damage the party.

He said he had given the advice on campaign tactics to prevent the party from being ruined by members jockeying for key positions.

On the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said he had not given much thought to the matter.

He said there was no time limit for him to appoint his deputy and cited his appointment during the Tun Hussein Onn administration.

"It took Tun Hussein three or four months to do it (appoint him as deputy). I can take my time,

maybe one or two years."

Asked if he would appoint deputy president-designate Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to the post, Dr Mahathir said that could be possible.

To another question as to whether he would observe tradition and appoint Anwar to the post, Dr Mahathir replied: "I will have to think about that. It is not impossible."

Dr Mahathir also refuted suggestions the Cabinet would be reshuffled after the assembly.

"A cabinet reshuffle has noth-

ing to do with the Umno elections. I can change the Cabinet. That's the beauty of being Prime Minister.

"I am not bound by any rules or regulations (to reshuffle the Cabinet). If I feel like changing it, I'll change it," he added in lighter vein.

As to whether there were plans to create a special position for Abdul Ghafar Baba in recognition for his service, the Prime Minister said there were no plans at the moment.

Supreme council member Da-

tuk Syed Hamid Albar, reacting to Dr Mahathir's speech, said it was meant to ensure that members returned to the original direction.

Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said the advice should make members realise the need to bring about good values to the party.

"His advice is especially for the younger members and they (the younger ones) must remember that what they want to do, it must be good for the party," she added.