

PM: Leaders must be efficient

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the nation needs leaders who are efficient, patriotic, capable in many fields, good politically and able to administer efficiently.

The Prime Minister, in listing the qualities that the nation's leaders should have, said: "We need to compete with other countries.

We need stability and we need growth. We need to maintain our freedom.

"To ensure all these, we need leaders who are efficient and capable in many fields. We need leaders who are good politically and be able to administer efficiently. We need leaders who are patriotic.

"If all these qualities are not in individuals, and one must grant that they are not easy to find, then these qualities should at least be found

in those who lead the party and Government.

"They must work as a team and not because they come from a team. There are no places for prima donnas in Government. What we must have are people who are efficient, skilled, willing to put self behind party and nation, and readiness to put duty and country above all else."

He gave these criteria in his opening address at the Umno annual general as-

sembly here today. The Umno president took note of the fact that this year, Umno members were faced with choosing party leaders again.

He said: "Umno upholds the principles of democracy because it is fair and safe. The most important thing in a democracy is the right to choose leaders. This means that leaders can be changed if the majority of members want to do so.

"Even though we have

and capable

done this many times since the party was formed, we cannot escape from facing this problem. The higher the post being contested, the bigger the problem.

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"But I am hopeful that we can overcome this problem and whatever negative effects that may have arisen accompanying the election."

He told members that the choice rested with them as they had the right to decide.

He said: "We will get what we deserve. Whether the Government we choose is good or bad depends on us. If we choose on the basis of desire, then the consequence would be fatal. But if we evaluate properly, God willing, we may gain happiness."

The Prime Minister touched on a wide range of

topics from national achievements, the economy, the administration, the Malays and the Bumiputeras, Umno and politics and international relations.

Later, when asked at a packed Press conference whether the contests for the various posts would have an adverse effect on party unity, Dr Mahathir said whatever happened in the last

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Party much stronger now

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few months could always be corrected.

"We have had a worse experience in 1987 when several of the top leaders left to form a new party. They have now discovered that they could not get the support of many ex-Umno members who have rejoined the party.

"So, Umno today is much stronger than at any time before. Except for a slight after-effect of an election campaign, I'm quite sure

that members will be in ranks."

Asked by a foreign journalist on how long he intended to stay as party president, Dr Mahathir said that it all depended on his health and the wishes of the members.

He said: "It depends on whether they want me or not. But it will be wrong (for me) not to take note of the feelings of party members. If they get tired of me, it's wrong for me to present myself (as a leader)."

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Asked whether he had changed his mind about attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in the United States later this month, Dr Mahathir said he had not.

He said: "I will not be going. Apec should not be equated with the European Community or any free trade arrangement.

"It should focus on projects which can benefit all members, particularly members who are developing," he added.