

Dr M: Umno tradition where deputy takes over when the time comes to conti

Dr Mahathir Mohamed

No contest for top two posts

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and
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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there would be no contest for the top two party posts in next year's party elections.

The Prime Minister said the party's tradition where the deputy president takes over the presidency when the time comes would continue.

He also dismissed the impression that there was a misunderstanding between the president and the deputy president and that the deputy president would challenge the president next year.

"This is not true at all," he said.

The impression was mentioned and discussed at the divisional level by certain candidates who were bankrupt politically, he said.

Dr Mahathir made this point when speaking to reporters at a Press conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at party headquarters here.

Asked whether he was confident that there would be no contest between the president and the deputy president next year, Dr Mahathir said there would be no contest.

Amidst laughter, he said: "We follow tradition... the deputy will take over from

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the president when the time comes."

Dr Mahathir was then asked whether there has been an assurance from his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, that there would be no contest next year, the Prime Minister said: "Why ask me? Please remember that not only the deputy can challenge, others can too."

At this juncture, the Prime Minister turned to Anwar who was seated on his right and remarked in jest: "Okay, *jawablah* (okay, go ahead and answer)."

There was all-round laughter when Dr Mahathir, looking towards Anwar, raised his right hand and said: "I swear on my word..."

Anwar, addressing the Press conference said: "I have made this statement even at the divisional meetings. I feel that this matter should not be raised, my support should not be questioned at all."

"If it is raised, it is raised by politicians who are bankrupt and psychologically ill (*sakit jiwa*)."

Asked whether his reply was a "no" to a challenge against the president, Anwar said: "You still raise it, you are either bankrupt or psychologically ill (*sakit jiwa*)."

Asked whether the matter of no-contest for the top post was a policy, Dr Mahathir said: "It's not a policy but a tradition."

Asked whether the matter

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PM: Reject those who make false claims

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of no-contest also applies for the number two post, he said this was so.

But he said that there could be contests for the number three post, that of vice-presidents.

Dr Mahathir said that while the focus of the supreme council at its previous meetings was on money politics, this time it was on the use of certain names, that of the president and his deputy, in the current divisional elections.

The use of names concerned candidates who claimed that they were the president's candidates who were out to defeat the candidates of the deputy president, he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were also candidates who claimed that they received the blessing of the deputy president to oust the candi-

dates of the president.

He said this matter had no basis whatsoever. The truth was that there were no candidates who could claim to be of the president or of the deputy president.

"There is no directive or blessing from me, my deputy or any Menteri Besar, so that certain quarters could try to control the division, purportedly that if they can control the division they can deliver what is called the bonus votes to candidates in 1996. All these are not true."

Under the party constitution, each nomination for the posts of president and deputy president automatically carries 10 votes.

He said members should reject candidates who claimed they have the blessing of leaders to contest at the divisional level as they should contest on their own capability and popularity.

They should not depend on anyone, either the president, the deputy president or the Menteri Besar.

Asked whether the use of the president's name and that of the deputy president was widespread, Dr Mahathir said it was not.

He said it only concerned certain divisions and that the number was small.

When told that contest at the divisional level this year had been intense, and whether he foresaw that the contests in next year's poll would also be equally intense, Dr Mahathir said the majority of the divisional contests were not intense.

Asked whether the 10-vote system for each nomination for the president and the deputy reflected a negative aspect, Dr Mahathir said the system did not amount to a bonus.

He said the issue was not of bonus, adding that it was

done to recognise the stand taken by the divisions. Sometimes, the delegates sent by the division to the general assembly would ignore the stand and allow themselves to be bought as was seen in the 1987 contest.

Dr Mahathir drew attention to the 1987 contest when he received more than 80 per cent of the nominations but won the presidency by 43 votes. This meant that there were people who went to the assembly but did not adhere to the division's choice.

"We know that some people admitted that they were bought," he said.

Asked whether the 10-vote system would be abolished, Dr Mahathir said this was not discussed.

Asked whether it would be retained: "As far as I know it is retained."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said all decisions taken by the

supreme council were unanimous and added that there was no reason why certain quarters should claim that some Supreme Council members objected to them.

He said this was a ploy by certain quarters to show that the supreme council was not united. He added that while there could be differences of opinion during discussions, the decisions, once taken, were accepted by all members.

Asked whether the talk of differences at the supreme council involved ministers, Dr Mahathir said that this was not so.

He said: "Others are telling stories that certain supreme council members did not agree with decisions."

Dr Mahathir added that some people even gave instances when the deputy president did not agree with the decisions but that the president insisted on it.