

# Of democracy and move not to change leadership

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — There is democracy in Umno even if the party leadership does not change, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said today.

"In a democracy, what is important is the ability to change leadership when it is necessary.

"But not changing the leadership does not mean there is no democracy," he said at a Press conference at the end of the three-day Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

The Prime Minister was asked if the resolution passed yesterday by the assembly for him and deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to remain uncontested until 1999 would be made part of the party constitution.

Dr Mahathir said it could not be incorporated because Umno was democratic.

He said some people felt

that if there was no change in leadership, then there was no democracy.

Dr Mahathir said if members made the decision not to change leadership, that was also a decision made democratically.

"We feel that if there is a right to the ability not to change leadership, then there is democracy.

"Therefore democracy in the party is not jeopardised. We don't need to make any amendments to the constitution (for this)," he said.

Asked on what Umno's plans were given that the question of succession had been resolved, Dr Mahathir said the party was gearing up for the party elections next year, particularly the election of the three vice-president posts.

There are also preparation for the party's 50th anniversary, which is also top of the agenda given that not many political parties,

especially in Malaysia, have survived that long.

"We have a lot to do in support of the Government to ensure that our vision progresses," he said.

He also said the party would continue to deal with accusations of money politics in the party.

On if the party would still look into the issue of the "10 bonus points" for candidates nominated to contest the presidency and deputy presidency, he said it was and clarified that it was not bonus points in the actual sense of the word but was a way of giving divisions the right to make their choice in the elections as they represented the grassroots.

To a question, he said in this situation the delegates did not reflect the views of the divisions.

"Sometimes they are deflected by certain elements, sometimes unfairly in ways that are not good for the morale of the party.

"We have to make sure the views of the division carry some weight in the election for president and deputy president," he said.

In reply to a question on politicking during party elections, he said people were only human and would sometimes react negatively when they lost in an election.

"When there is stiff competition, harsh words are used, allegations are thrown. There is bad feeling and anger.

"When the person is defeated, he no longer wants to be in the party, no longer wants to give support.

"Even sabotage the party. People are only human."

Asked to advise would-be candidates for the vice-president posts, he urged them to engage in a "good, friendly" contest and not "go all out and follow some people's precept about going for broke".

"When you win, you shake hands with the loser. The loser will fall in behind and support you. That is how it should be."

Dr Mahathir said people should understand the "spirit of the game" and not "go out for the kill".

He said the tendency to "go for broke" in contests should not be followed, he said.

The Umno president also said he was satisfied with the proceedings at the three-day assembly which saw debates of substance, good ideas and constructive criticisms.

He fielded questions from reporters covering points made in his winding-up speech earlier and points raised by delegates.

Also present were Anwar, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, and Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, who is also Information Minister.

Dr Mahathir