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Musa-President

MAHATHIR'S STATEMENT SHOWS UMNO IS NOW STRONGER, SAYS MUSA

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Former Umno Deputy President Tan Sri Musa Hitam said today the statement by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the contest for the posts of Umno President and Deputy President in 1999 showed that the party is now more secured and stronger.

"It's true that in Umno, nothing prevents these posts from being contested but what is being reminded is that if the contest is to be held there must be responsible attitude among Umno members at all levels," he told Bernama, here tonight.

He said that in the past three years Umno was not that strong unlike now and as such it was appropriate that the two key posts be contested.

Umno President Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had, at a news conference at the end of the second day of the Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here, said that he and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim are willing to have a contest for their posts in the 1999 Umno elections provided the contest is clean.

Dr Mahathir also said the no-contest decision, made at the 1995 Umno General Assembly, for the president and deputy president's posts for the current term would not be institutionalised.

Musa, a former Deputy Prime Minister, said that by allowing the posts to be contested Umno would go back to its original practice.

It would also give Dr Mahathir the confidence and trust in the leaders at all levels that they would make a wise decision if the contest was held.

"It's not an offer to challenge him or his deputy but to make Umno members realise of their responsibility in the real sense of democracy," he said.

He said the important thing was that Umno members must give priority to party unity.

Asked if reviving the contest would cause a split within the party, Musa said that even without such a contest, there was no guarantee that it would not occur if Umno members did not adopt a responsible attitude.

There are some two million Umno members and it is important that they remember what the split in 1987 did to the party, he said. -- BERNAMA

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