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Be responsible, Umno delegates told (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Delegates to the Umno general assembly who raise issues which may destabilise the party must be accountable for their actions, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the delegates should also bear the consequences of their actions.

He said his advice was neither a form of blackmail nor a gag order but was merely a reminder to the delegates to be responsible to the party.

Dr Mahathir said this after a closed-door pre-council briefing before the four-day Umno general assembly which kicks off with the Youth and Wanita assemblies tomorrow.

Also present was Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

"The briefing was merely to explain and not to issue directives on what delegates can say.

"It was only to emphasise that it is important for them to be responsible for what they say."

Dr Mahathir said that if something arises from what they have said, they must be willing to be held accountable."

Asked whether delegates speaking about the so-called nepotism and cronyism should be responsible for their actions, Dr Mahathir said: "If they cause a split within the party or other adverse effects, then they should be responsible."

Dr Mahathir said this was not a form of blackmail but a reminder to those who might forget their responsibility.

"Then when something happens, they say that they did not anticipate such reactions.

"We want responsible Umno members."

But Dr Mahathir said delegates who could substantiate their claims about issues, including cronyism and nepotism, could raise the matter freely.

"If you want to bring up such matters, you must have the facts."

Asked what sort of action would be taken against those who bring up issues irresponsibly, he said no action would be taken, but the delegates should be accountable for their actions.

Dr Mahathir said of late, there had been some members who had spoken on certain issues which they could not substantiate.

"This is very bad for the country and the party," he said, adding that he was confident that Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi who had said that he would bring up the issues of cronyism and nepotism, would do so responsibly.

"I will also be responsible for what I say. I cannot say something which will hurt the party and then say sorry."

He said he also explained to the delegates that in its efforts to develop the nation, the Government tried to ensure equal distribution of wealth.

On whether he would support any motion that there should be no contest for the president and deputy president posts in next year's party elections, Dr Mahathir said:

"No, I am not in support but on the other hand I also cannot stop them from presenting such a motion ... that will be quite undemocratic. I am quite open to contest or anything like that."

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the "winds of change" blowing in

Southeast Asia which saw certain political changes in the region.

"The winds can blow in any direction they like but whether there should be a change or not is also the choice of the people."

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