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PM has not decided on deputy but outlines qualities needed

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he has not decided who his deputy will be but outlined some of the attributes his deputy should possess.

He said it was not true that he had made up his mind and would announce the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister soon.

"I've made a statement (earlier) that I will wait until the party's elections next year but many hold a different view on this.

"They feel I should not wait that long because if something were to happen to me, what would happen then ... so, these are the concerns," he said at a Press conference after the conclusion of a one-day Umno extraordinary general meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Asked to give a description of the kind of person he was looking for as his deputy, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said in jest: "Someone who is the exact replica of myself."

On a more serious note, he felt that what was more important was the ability of his successor to continue with the country's policies as compared to one's personality.

"This is to assure investors in the country that there will not be a sudden 180-degree turn."

To a question as to whether he had anybody in mind who would fit the bill, Dr Mahathir said there were quite a few people who did.

"Some fit here, some fit there. If they fit in completely, they will be my twin, but I don't have one."

Dr Mahathir confirmed that the Menteri Besar had met him on the vacancy.

"Not only the MBs but other people have also come to see me to give their views. I listen to all."

He said there were mixed views on when he should appoint his deputy.

"Some feel that it is better to wait for the party's elections as it will be more democratic. Others argued that in the past, we did not wait for party's elections ... they cited my case when I was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister before the party decided on its deputy president."

On whether it was true that members of Parliament had also conveyed their views that a Deputy Prime Minister should be appointed now, Dr Mahathir said there was no truth to it.

Asked whether he would change his mind and would make the appointment before the party elections given that there were people who wanted him to do that now, Dr Mahathir said he had not made up his mind yet.

On whether the amendments to the constitution would give rise to money politics in view of the possible contest for many top posts, Dr Mahathir said the amendments were introduced to curb this practice.

"At the same time, I have stressed in my speech on the importance of creating an Umno culture capable of combating malpractices. Laws alone are not enough."

Asked to comment on the lack of debate at today's assembly, Dr Mahathir said it might be because it was related to amendments to the party's constitution.

"Anyhow, they supported the amendments ... so they have to be present because without this, they cannot be passed."

On whether delegates were expecting some kind of announcement on the Deputy Prime Minister's post, Dr Mahathir said he did not think so.

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