

21/06/1999

`No ill-feelings towards DPM'

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday he did not harbour ill-feelings towards Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi although the latter, together with a splinter group, had once mounted a challenge against the party leadership.

The Prime Minister said he did not hesitate to appoint Abdullah as his deputy as he had remained loyal to Umno.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, was referring to the 1987 party election, where the then vice-president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah challenged him for the presidency.

Abdullah was then aligned to Tengku Razaleigh's group.

The bitter challenge was followed by a legal battle in 1987 resulting in Umno being declared illegal a year later.

Dr Mahathir said: "What is important is loyalty to the party, not loyalty to me. I am not asking members to be loyal to me, but they have to remain loyal to the party to ensure its continued survival," he said at a luncheon organised by Umno Kelantan on the sidelines of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre which ended yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said Pas was able to wrest control of Kelantan because the State Umno was weak, and not that Pas was strong.

"If we remedy this weakness, Umno can win in Kelantan," he said.

Dr Mahathir added Umno members must pool their resources and strengthen unity to ensure victory in the general election.

Dr Mahathir said with members of the defunct Parti Melayu Semangat 46 joining Umno, Umno had become stronger in Kelantan. "We must put aside our differences. We should not harbour ill-feelings towards former Semangat 46 members who had (joined or) rejoined Umno."

(END)