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Dr M: Don't be overzealous

Ramlan Said; Mimi Syed Yusof

IPOH, Mon. - Umno members should not be overzealous in securing posts in divisional elections next year, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister, who is also party president, said Umno did not want to see intense fighting for posts which could result in members leaving.

"We are asking and appealing to division heads (not to be overzealous).

"We do not want to have a lose-lose situation where the losers will leave ... it will affect the party's strength," he said.

However, the Prime Minister said the party had not decided on whether to ban campaigning or to impose rules on aspirants and candidates.

He was speaking at a Press conference after chairing a three-hour supreme council meeting at the residence of Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali.

On whether Menteris Besar not being appointed Umno State liaison heads could affect the smooth administration of State Governments, Dr Mahathir said he did not think so.

"If not liaison chiefs, they are appointed as deputies ... it is the same as they have similar roles.

"Also, this is not the first time that Menteris Besar have not been appointed to that post."

Dr Mahathir said he also explained to the council the criteria used in selecting the 10 appointed council members.

He said it was important that a chance be given to those who did not have the opportunity to contest but could serve the party.

Asked to rate the performance of the 10 after having gone through their first council meeting, Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied.

"But since this is their first meeting, they listened more as they are not familiar with the proceedings. Give them a chance."

However, only five of the 10 were present.

On which State would be hosting the next outstation council meeting, Dr Mahathir said it had not been decided but a list was being compiled which would give the host States more time to make preparations.

Dr Mahathir said that when attending council meetings held in the States, council members had been told to take the opportunity to meet members.

Besides the usual bi-monthly council meetings, he said the body would also hold special meetings to discuss specific subjects like how Islam had been misused by Pas and the necessary measures to address them.

The Prime Minister was also asked to comment on a news report that Bumiputeras owned a very small portion of commercial lots in shopping complexes compared to non-Bumiputeras.

Dr Mahathir said this was because many Bumiputeras were poor while those owning land could not develop their property due to certain restrictions like those imposed on Malay reserve and native land.

"Even if they want to develop their land, there is not much value as the land is in rural areas.

"But if these rural land can be developed and turned into townships, the value will go up.

"Like in Langkawi, the price of land has gone up.

"If before, one acre of land can only fetch RM1,000, the asking price now is between RM250,000 and RM500,000."

Dr Mahathir said the Government could provide assistance but land owners

must learn how to manage their properties.
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