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Dr M: Divisions may get special allocations

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UMNO divisions may be given special allocations to carry out their activities if the party has sufficient funds, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said while divisions generally did not have sufficient funds, the party also did not allow them to collect money.

"Only the State liaison committees are allowed to collect money and if the divisions do not have funds and if we have the money, we will give a little," he said, adding that the amount would depend on how much was in the party's coffers.

On whether the party would fix the amount of allocation, he said: "I only just became the party treasurer, how much money (is in the party's coffers) I do not know."

Dr Mahathir was asked on the matter which was raised by Yan division chief Datuk Badrudin Amiruldin during the debate on the motion of thanks for the president's address earlier.

Badrudin had asked for the party to allocate some funds to enable the divisions to carry out more activities.

On the statement by Pasir Mas division chief Datuk Ibrahim Ali that all leaders needed to work to strengthen the party, Dr Mahathir clarified that all Umno leaders were doing their fair share but unfortunately the media did not give adequate coverage when they visited the villages.

On whether his hard-hitting speech would affect him politically, Dr Mahathir said it was normal that certain quarters would not be able to accept his comments.

"Yes, some people will feel unhappy about it. There are some people who don't like to be told the truth.

"But I suspect that a lot of people would heed the warning; they have to be told they are not doing the right thing," he said at a Press conference at the end of the second day of proceedings of the 55th Umno General Assembly.

Dr Mahathir was also asked whether the country would continue to strive to achieve its vision 2020 targets when he is no longer around.

"I have already made sure the leadership is working towards that vision, it is not necessary for me to be around," he added.

Dr Mahathir said whoever succeeded him would be the one to lead the country to achieve the targets.

"As you know, our succession is based on the Number Two man. If I am not around, the Number Two who is Datuk Seri Abdullah (Ahmad Badawi) will take over... he is very well acquainted with the vision."

Asked whether he was aware that former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin was overseas at present, he said Daim was free to go anywhere he wished as there was no restriction imposed on him.

Dr Mahathir said Daim had confided in him that he was in a difficult position. "If he (Daim) goes abroad, the Press will say that he is running away from being arrested."

Dr Mahathir stressed that Daim was not going to be arrested and that he could go abroad.

He said he saw Daim, who on June 1 also resigned as Special Functions Minister and Umno treasurer, before the Umno General Assembly. "He did not tell me whether he was going abroad or not."

In jest, Mahathir said the Press was asking questions (about Daim) in a

roundabout way.

"This is what they taught you at the School of Mass Communications. I'm not a political scientist, I did not go to any school to learn politics. I'm a doctor."

Asked to respond to calls by some delegates today not to allow one person to hold directorships in many companies, he said such a thing did not happen in Government-owned companies.

However, he said such a practice happened in the private sector. Daim however had restricted the number (of directorship) to just a few companies.

"My son Mirzan was said to be a director of 90 companies and earned RM900,000 in allowances a month.

"He (Mirzan) has resigned and now his income is less," he said jokingly.

Asked if the Government would issue sovereign bonds soon, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, I think so... the (Bank Negara) Governor has already mentioned it."

Asked if the bonds would be issued to maintain foreign reserves and peg on the ringgit, Dr Mahathir said: "We do this quite regularly in order to finance government projects ... but I just received a report on the financial situation in the Government and it is very good indeed.

"We think we can still borrow without affecting our ability to pay or to service the loans in the future."

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