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No more contracts

ak Ahmad; Sajahan Waheed; Chow Kum Hor

UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hinted today that divisional leaders will not get any contracts to ease the intense competition among members for positions in the party.

Dr Mahathir said this might be the solution to reduce such intensity in the fight for positions among Umno members which, if prolonged, would make the party weaker and was counter-productive. He said this in a dialogue with veterans at a special gathering in conjunction with the party's 55th anniversary at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

It was learnt that during the closed-door session, four veteran members were given the opportunity to state their views about the party.

Dr Mahathir had said that in many instances the selection of candidates for the general election was always being questioned by party members.

A division leader quoted the party president as saying that people had weaknesses and no one was perfect.

Dr Mahathir had said that the problem was that opinions differed when people made decisions.

The division leader said Dr Mahathir cited as an example the process of choosing a candidate to stand for the election.

The party president was said to have lamented that the right candidate might have been chosen but other people would have a different opinion about him or her.

Dr Mahathir said that he was always faced with the problem of Umno members being dissatisfied with the choice of candidates and, due to this, did not give full support to them.

"In the end, we lost in the election," Dr Mahathir had said. He also stressed that when a decision has been made on who should stand as a candidate, members should not question the selection.

The party president said the most important thing was for members to give priority to the party by ensuring that the candidates, no matter who they were, would win the election.

Another division leader said during the dialogue the veterans spoke of the need to close ranks among the members and strategies to counter the Opposition in facing the 2004 general election.

He said there was even a veteran who voiced his concern over the intense campaigning, the fact that members were so absorbed in making sure that they win the election rather than working for the survival and future of the party.

"All are so absorbed in the race to clinch a post in the party that they have forgotten who their real enemy is," he said.

A representative from Terengganu criticised Umno leaders in the State who failed to come up with strategies to counter the Opposition and focused more on the recent party election.

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