

Report on Kelantan Umno speculation'

SUN. 30 MAR 2007

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SHAH ALAM, Fri: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad dismissed today reports alleging a coup is brewing in Kelantan Umno, describing it as mere speculation.

"That's speculation," the Umno president said when asked to comment on the front page report in the *New Straits Times* that 12 of the 14 Kelantan Umno division heads wanted to replace the party's state office-bearers, claiming they were ineffective.

Quoting a division head confirming that the 12 had reached a consensus that the five office-bearers should be replaced, the report identified the five as Kelantan Umno chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, secretary Datuk Ahmad Rusli Ibrahim, treasurer Datuk Dr Nik Hussain Abdul Rahman, information chief Mohd Noor Deris and executive secretary Mohd Nawawi Yaacob.

Speaking at a press conference after launching the Selangor Barisan Nasional (BN) convention here today, Mahathir said he was not aware of a request to replace the five.

"I don't know. I have to

ask the 12 people. They did not tell me . . . this is beyond my control.

"They give priority in informing the press first rather than the party president," he added.

Asked if he thinks there is a need for a change of leadership in Kelantan, he said no leader in the party is permanent, adding that sometimes leaders are not effective.

"Even I was thrown out as Kelantan Umno liaison

chief and later replaced by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

"When Razaleigh resigned, the position was taken over by Mustapa (Datuk Mustapa Mohamed).

"You don't expect Mustapa to be the state liaison chief for life . . . even I could not take it when I was there for 10 years. I was thrown out for not being successful," he added.

Asked if he is trying to

make a hint, Mahathir said he is not trying to hint anything, "what I am saying is that no one, including myself, is permanent."

At another function later, Mahathir denied that the government victimised corporate leaders when it acquired back certain bumiputra companies, saying that the government undertook such action to prevent such bumiputra companies from going under.