

From goreng pisang seller to Prime Minister of Malaysia

Nst-3MAY 21332

JITRA, Thurs. *In one* of his lighter moods, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad talked about how one could become a Prime Minister but warned potential candidates not to get too carried away with the ambition.

He said Umno's struggle was such that a *mere goreng pisang* vendor was able to rise to the position of Prime Minister as he had done. He warned potential candidates not to resort to extreme tactics to get the post.

"Who would have thought that a *goreng pisang* seller at Pekan Rabu like myself could one day become Prime Minister?"

"I used to fry bananas. But in the end I managed to become Prime Minister. Still this does not mean that all of us should go out and open up *goreng pisang* stalls.

"Even if we do, we must not have overly big ambitions, but expand our business gradually. God willing, we could even become a millionaire, though maybe not Prime Minister," he said at the Kubang Pasu Umno division annual dele-

gate's meeting. On a more serious note, Dr Mahathir, who is the division chief and party president, warned against becoming consumed by the ambition to become Prime Minister.

"Don't be too obsessed in becoming Prime Minister ... we can only have one Prime Minister at any one time, and if we do not attain it do not feel disheartened.

"Continue to fight in our party; don't go out to establish another party, supposedly to fight to become Prime Minister."

He said he never planned, or dreamed, of attaining his position.

Dr Mahathir said some people tried to dissuade him from joining Umno, saying that it was enough that he remained a doctor while they fought in Umno.

"In the end, I could only become Prime Minister following the deaths of two Umno leaders, (then Deputy Prime Minister) Tun Dr Ismail and (then Prime Minister) Tun Abdul Razak.

"And even when Tun Hussein became Prime Minister, he could

have chosen anyone as his successor.

"Many wanted the post of Prime Minister but Tun Hussein eventually chose me. I thank God, it wasn't like I went and campaigned for the post," said Dr Mahathir.

Quickly resorting to his usual dry wit, the Prime Minister added:

"I did not campaign, did not have to use even one sen: it's not like you don't know about my parsimony (*bakhil*)."

Dr Mahathir said many, such as those among the Chinese community, were shocked when he became Prime Minister.

"Some of them believed that I was anti-Chinese, but now they support me, sometimes stronger than the Malays do."

Addressing the Muslim audience, Dr Mahathir said candidates should not be too caught up in wanting to become Prime Minister, "to the extent of calling people names such as *firaun*, *Mahafiraun*, *Mahazalim*, things they know to be untrue, just because they want to be Prime Minister."