

'Transition is in place'

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PM: No reason for a power struggle

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed talk of a possible power struggle within Umno or the Barisan Nasional after he steps down as prime minister in October.

He said yesterday such talk is mere wishful thinking by people who are disappointed that all is well in the ruling coalition and are hoping for something bad to happen so that they can benefit.

"Everything is already in place to ensure that the transfer of power will be peaceful and orderly once I step down," the prime minister said following PPP's New Year open house at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Mahathir said there was no reason for any power struggle as it is general knowledge that his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, would succeed him.

While there is already a prime minister-in-waiting, the question of who will fill the position of the deputy prime minister would also be resolved in time and in a proper way, he said.

"Power transition will take place smoothly without any problems and there has been good acceptance from party members at grassroot level," he said, adding that "neither Umno nor BN would allow a power struggle to occur and any such attempts would be defeated."

He was asked to comment on a statement by PAS acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang that a power struggle will take place in Umno once Mahathir steps down in October.

This, said Mahathir who is also BN chairman, was Abdul Hadi's wishful thinking, and he is free to make his own predictions.

On the question of a possible contest for the deputy prime minister's post, Mahathir said: "We will also handle that one well. During my time it was also like that; it was the same during the time of Datuk (Tun) Hussein (Onn). We can manage these things."

In June last year, Mahathir made the shock announcement on the last day of the Umno General Assembly of his intention to step down as the prime minister, Umno pres-

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ident and BN chairman.

Following that a power transfer formula was drawn up where Mahathir said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will succeed him.

On another matter, the prime minister said the BN supreme council meeting will be held on Jan 7 and will discuss mainly

party problems, including the two suspended MCA assemblymen and the overlapping claims over Pulau Batu Puteh.

"We have always protected the country's dignity, but in a smart way."

On his New Year wish, Mahathir said he wishes BN to grow stronger, have better unity and discipline which can contribute to the coalition's success.