

PM fears power struggle iii Umno

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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is worried that there will be a power struggle in Umno after he steps down in October

In an interview with *Mingguan Malaysia* published yesterday, Mahathir expressed his fears of a battle for the posts of deputy president, vice-presidents and even for lesser positions.

The Umno president, however, reiterated his confidence in Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi's ability, and does not think anyone will challenge his position.

"However, there is bound to be a struggle at other lev-

els. There are a number of people who want to be deputy president, vice-presidents and even positions below these," said Mahathir.

A sort of tacit agreement was worked out two years ago where Abdullah will not be opposed as president. He is allowed to pick his deputy when Mahathir steps down.

"Usually presidents are not challenged. The fight is usually at the deputy president level. Once that position is filled there is no more fight. Datuk Anwar Ibrahim challenged Tun Ghafar Baba in 1993," he explained.

Asked about Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah fighting Tan Sri

Musa Hitam a second time, he replied: "Yes, he broke tradition. There should not be any more challenge after Musa won the first selection."

Mahathir said the tradition of not challenging the number two position after selection has been concluded should be preserved.

He clarified that Abdullah will determine who would be the deputy prime minister when he becomes prime minister

On Mahathir mentioning vice-president and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak as the future number two, he said: "I did not name Najib. Actually, in a meeting

of my branch (Kubang Pasu), I was just saying it. I did not know there were reporters present."

When asked if he named Najib because it is his personal preference, Mahathir replied, "It seems that way."

On his concern of contests within the party may be unwarranted as it is a democratic process, he responded, "They do not understand contests. They only understand they have to have a faction if they want to contest. If they lose, they do not want to support the winner."

He said the losers should support the winner after a contest.