

PM doesn't want No. 2 challenged

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by R. Manirajan
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday reiterated his wishes that there won't be any challenges for the deputy president post once the candidate is selected as it would be against party tradition.

He said the Umno vice-presidents have given their assurances but those not holding the vice-presidents post might contest against them.

"In our party we can't say there is no challenge at all. But I hope according to Umno's tradition when a deputy president is selected, he

should not be challenged even though this tradition was broken by certain people before," he said after chairing the special Umno presidential briefing for delegates at Putra World Trade Centre.

When told that since the deputy president's post will be vacant after Datuk Seri Abdllah Ahmad Badawi has assumed the party president's post, he said: "Before the candidate is elected there may be a contest. But after he is elected the tradition is that you don't challenge."

Asked if this means if there is a contest it should be allowed. Mahathir said: "If there is'... but there are certain norms that we follow."

For example, he said, former prime minister Tun

Hussien Onn selected him (Mahathir) as the deputy prime minister but not as Umno deputy president.

"When the time came for the party election, I was nominated as party deputy president without any challenge."

The party president said he hopes there won't be any challenge for the deputy president post, citing many reshuffles need to be done.

On his briefing to the delegates, he said he explained the role of leaders to all the division heads present, including the importance of their role in the general election.

He said as leaders they must ensure victory for the party and they must have an attitude according to their

leadership to ensure victory. Asked if the briefing include the issue of internal power struggle; he said "yes" without elaborating further.

"Good leadership means there won't be power struggle. If there is contest, after that they should close ranks and support whoever wins."

Asked if this year's briefing was different compared to previous years, he said: "It's the same thing I repeated it's good because I pointed out that people tend to forget. Do you remember what I told you 10 years ago?"

On what he expects from this year's general assembly, he said it is just an ordinary assembly and no difference except it will be his last time opening the assembly