

17 JUN 2003

Mahathir-Post

I WILL NOT RETIRE BEFORE OCTOBER - DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that he will stick to his plans to retire in October and will not step down earlier.

"(You) want to worry, you can worry but I will hold to my pledge. When I make a promise, I will not renege on it, do something that can affect credibility," he told a news conference after speaking at the 57th Umno General Assembly pre-council briefing at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked on the worries of certain quarters that he might use the general assembly to announce that he would be retiring earlier than scheduled.

At last year's general assembly, Dr Mahathir shocked the party and the nation by announcing that he was retiring. Following appeals by leaders and members, he agreed to stay on until October this year.

Asked on his hope for this assembly, the Umno president said he considered it as just another annual assembly of the party.

"Other than the fact that this is the last time I will open it (as the party president)," he said.

Asked whether this assembly would be filled with emotions, he said: "Last year, there were a lot of emotions already, already exhausted, no more tears. Dry already."

Earlier, Dr Mahathir spent about an hour addressing Supreme Council members, division heads, Youth and Wanita division heads, division assistant secretaries and treasurers, and division information chiefs.

The closed-door meeting was also attended by deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the three vice-presidents, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib.

Asked what message he conveyed at the meeting, Dr Mahathir said he repeated his advice that leaders should give priority to the party and not personal interests.

Umno leaders at all levels should play their role to ensure the party's victory, especially at the next general election, he said.

"As leaders they should ensure the party's victory and there are suitable attitudes for leaders to ensure the party's victory. A leader should be concerned about the party's victory and not his own position," he said.

He said it was good to remind people as they could easily forget.

"Good to repeat. Remember, 10 years ago; so I have to repeat," he said when referring to a split experienced by the party.

Dr Mahathir said good leaders would see to it that the party would not face problems.

"Good leadership means there will be no power struggle. If there is a power struggle, after the power struggle they will close ranks and give support to whoever wins," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SHO RAR KHY YBY