

17 JUN 2003

Mahathir-Tradition

MAINTAIN TRADITION OF NOT CHALLENGING THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hopes that the party tradition of not challenging anyone appointed as the deputy president would be maintained.

"I hope that following party tradition, when a deputy president has been chosen he would not be challenged subsequently, although this tradition had been broken by someone before," he said.

As an example, he recalled how he had won unopposed for the post of party deputy president after being appointed deputy prime minister previously.

"When Datuk (Tun) Hussein Onn became the (third) prime minister, he had chosen me as deputy prime minister. But I was not the Umno deputy president then.

"When the time came for the (party) election, I was nominated as party deputy president and there was no contest," he told a press conference after delivering his message at the President's Briefing in conjunction with the 57th Umno general assembly beginning Thursday.

He was commenting on the commitment given by the three Umno vice-presidents not to challenge anyone chosen as the party deputy president at the Umno election scheduled for next year.

"They (the vice-presidents) can make the pledge but there are others who are not vice-presidents who may challenge him (the deputy president). In the party, we don't say that there will be no challenge at all," he said.

When it was raised that technically the post of deputy president could be contested following the vacancy after the elevation of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as president, Dr Mahathir said:

"Before he is chosen (the announcement of the new deputy president) contests can be held. But after he has been chosen, the tradition is that he is not challenged."

The Prime Minister said if the number two post were to be challenged (after the person had been named), the situation would become complicated.

"The person who has become the deputy prime minister has to be changed, (because) the other says that he has become the party's deputy president and so he must be the deputy prime minister and so on, and also the other matters as well," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM JM KHY MOZ AO