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Dr M: Razaleigh's bid will fail

By Deborah Loh

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad predicted today that Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's bid to contest the Umno president's post would be met with abject failure.

"He can't get anything, not even one vote except maybe from his own division. If he says he wants to contest the post, that is his right, but he's not going to go anywhere," he said, commenting on the move by the veteran Umno politician to offer himself for the number one post in the ruling party.

The former Prime Minister felt that the tradition of not contesting the president's and deputy president's posts in Umno should always be followed.

"If you want to have contests, do it at the vice-president level. That is the tradition of Umno," he said at his office in Yayasan Perdana, where his staff had thrown a birthday party for him and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The Kelantan prince, who tried unsuccessfully to unseat Dr Mahathir as party president in 1987, declared his interest on Friday to contest the number one position.

He had said he was doing so because of strong support from the ground, to keep the practice of democracy alive in the party and because the position of president was "vacant".

Dr Mahathir said he did not know what was going through the mind of the veteran Umno politician, who left Umno and set up Semangat 46 after losing the 1987 party polls.

"I can't read his mind," he added. None of the 66 Umno divisions which have met have nominated Razaleigh for the number one post.

As this was the first time Dr Mahathir was speaking to the Press since the start of the Umno divisional meetings, reporters had a lot of questions for him on the party elections.

Dr Mahathir turned 79 on July 10 and Dr Siti Hasmah turned the same age today.

The birthday party was attended by close friends and some corporate figures.

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