

04/05/2004

Top two Umno posts should not be contested, says Dr Mahathir

PENANG, Mon. - It is imperative that the two top positions in Umno are not contested to avoid a split in the ranks, its former president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

However, it was alright to allow contests for the other posts, including the vice-presidents' posts, he said when asked to comment on suggestions from party members that the two top party positions remain uncontested.

He added that in strict adherence of Umno tradition, the posts of president and deputy president should never be contested if they had already been filled.

However, since the party was now without a deputy president, following the appointment of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as acting president last October, the party members should reach a consensus on his replacement and avoid a contest for the number two post, Dr Mahathir said.

"At present, we do not have a deputy president and we should all agree on one person.

"After doing that, he should not be challenged. This is to ensure a smooth transition when he takes over as party president," he said after delivering a keynote address at the Second Malaysian International Seminar on Antarctica at the Grand Plaza Parkroyal Hotel.

Dr Mahathir, however, did not mention any names for the deputy presidency.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abdullah is expected to be confirmed as Umno president at the party's general assembly, expected to be held within the next three months.

Likewise, his deputy, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is expected to seek endorsement for elevation to Umno deputy presidency during the meeting.

Asked on the barrage of complaints against the Election Commission over its handling of the recent general election, Dr Mahathir attributed it to human error.

(END)