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PM: No limit for Umno (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today limiting the tenure of a party president to three terms or nine years might be suitable for MCA, but not for other political parties.

"At the moment, Umno has got no problem. I have been Umno president for 22 years. If you have the limit, I would not be president (of Umno) and Prime Minister for such a long period," he said at a Press conference after opening the 50th MCA general assembly today.

He was asked to comment on MCA's decision to limit the tenure of the party president to nine years or three terms.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said limiting the tenure of a party or national leader could prevent the leader from contributing effectively to the party and nation.

Citing an example, he said if the leader's tenure was limited to five years, the leader would spend his first year learning the intricacies of administering the country or party, the second year settling down, the third year preparing for the next election, the fourth year campaigning and then it would already be his final year in office.

However, Dr Mahathir said the nineyear limit for the MCA president was "a good time and enough time to do what they want to do".

The proposal was unanimously adopted at the MCA assembly today.

Yesterday, the MCA Youth and Wanita assemblies also adopted a similar proposal for the Youth and Wanita chiefs' posts.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir described the Opposition coalition as a marriage of convenience resembling the act of khalwat (close proximity).

Likening their co-operation to a smartly-dressed man whose appearance was deceiving, the Prime Minister said there was no honesty among the Opposition parties at all.

"In front they are co-operating, but behind, they are thinking of how to defeat DAP, how to defeat Pas and the like. We in BN have found a common thread which has created co-operation among component parties and has reduced conflicts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said BN members' willingness to sacrifice some of their needs was a key to the coalition's success and in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the country.

He said that living in a multi-racial country did not make it possible for Malays to get 100 per cent of what they wanted and this also applied to the other races.

"We must be ready to share the wealth of the country and by taking a little bit less for ourselves, eventually we will get more.

"We must sacrifice... when you make a small sacrifice, you will gain more. If you don't want to sacrifice, you will get nothing in the end.

"It is better to have a slice of the growing cake than the whole of a shrinking cake," he said in what is his last opening address at the MCA general assembly before his retirement in October. Dr Mahathir has been opening the assembly since 1981.

Dr Mahathir said there was no way any race in this country could eliminate one another and, thus, it was better for the races to live together in harmony.

Present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, BN component party leaders and MCA veterans, including life president Tan Sri Lee San Choon.

