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Umno divisions directed to conduct dry runs before general election

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - All Umno divisions, Youth, Wanita and Puteri movements have been directed to conduct dry runs for the next general election, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

However, Dr Mahathir said the move was not an indication that the election would be held soon.

"We need to be prepared for the general election and that is why we must conduct dry runs to see the effectiveness of the party machinery," he said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir, who is Prime Minister, also clarified news reports, quoting him, on the existence of splinter groups in the party.

"I have already explained this to the supreme council members. Maybe the media did not understand what I had meant earlier. I did not say that there were splinter groups in Umno now.

"What I actually meant was previously there were splinter groups in Umno that had weakened the party."

Dr Mahathir said there were some quarters who were disappointed because they were not selected as division heads or candidates in the general election and thus carried out actions that weakened the party.

"These disappointed people would go out to ensure that the selected candidate did not win in the general election. This is what I had meant."

Meanwhile, Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said that he would continue with the existing policies when he takes over as the Prime Minister in October.

"I am often asked whether I will continue with the current policies and my answer is yes. I have already explained this to the council today.

"These policies are decided in the Cabinet as a collective responsibility after hearing the views of the Cabinet members. If in the future something happens that requires the policies to be amended, then we will do so," said Abdullah.

To this, Dr Mahathir quipped: "This means that the Government policies now are those decided by the Cabinet and are not Dr Mahathir's policies."