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What power struggle?

NOT so fast, Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, nor so soon. It is entirely understandable for the Pas leader to be counting down the days till the last week of October, when Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is due to retire as President of Umno, chairman of the Barisan Nasional, and Prime Minister. At this stage, however, it is too much of a leap to anticipate the instant fragmentation of Umno as a result.

The critical nexus of transition is that between Dr Mahathir and his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Umno is the baton being passed, hand-to-hand, and from one firm grasp to another. In each man's free hand is his personal future. For Dr Mahathir: a wider stage, a quieter role, more consultative than hortatory, and the documentation of his life and works. For Abdullah, on the other hand, there is the administration he will maintain, refurbish, install and supervise, as he sees fit.

Such uncertainty, competitiveness, or rearing of ambition as there is - and of course there is, among corporate and political careers across the board, including in the Opposition - operates at second and third-tier echelons under the usual senior management. At that all-important juncture between the present administration and the next, there is no more thought of ruction than there would be between relay runners bent on passing their baton to the finish line. The competition is against other teams, not among their own.