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'Abolish quota for top Umno posts'

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Mahathir: Election provision being abused to prevent opposition to leaders

KUALA LUMPUR: The nomination quota to contest top posts in Umno should be abolished, as it is being abused to prevent members from nominating candidates, said former party president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He pointed out that when he was president, anyone was free to challenge him, and although there was already the quota in place then, "those days it was easy to get 60 divisions (nominations)".

However, he added, when Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Ham-

zah wanted to challenge Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2004, he only managed to get one nomination from his own division.

"(This is) because other divisions were told not to nominate him. There was no freedom. I think it's about time they revised this provision because of the tendency of the people with the power to stifle any move to criticise or oppose them," he said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said there was nothing wrong with having a contest for

the presidency in the upcoming December party election, adding that other Umno presidents, including him, were also previously challenged.

After Umno Baru was formed in 1988, Dr Mahathir had proposed the bonus vote system, which was accepted by the party supreme council.

The bonus vote system gives 10 additional votes for every nomination received by a candidate, as well as setting a quota of 30% nominations from divisions to contest the president's post, 20% nominations for the deputy president's post, 10%

for the vice-presidents' posts and 5% for supreme council posts.

On who was likely to challenge Abdullah, Dr Mahathir said it could be Razaleigh (who had offered himself) or others. He said that Umno was not so poor in talent "that we cannot find even a single one to match the Prime Minister that we have."

On the call by DAP Ipoh Timur MP Lim Kit Siang for an inquiry into the 1988 judicial crisis, Dr Mahathir was adamant he was not in the wrong.

"I don't see why there is any crisis. It's a political game," he said, adding

that DAP chairman Karpal Singh wanted action to be taken against him for the episode "because he hates me so much".

He reiterated that the tribunal that tried former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas for misconduct had acted according to the law and there was no reason for an inquiry.

"So why should there be any apology by me, the Government or by anybody? It's no good saying that 'oh yes, although it was according to the law but because of this...'. That is political," he added.