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Mahathir alleges climate of fear in Umno

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SHAH ALAM: Umno members prefer not to speak their minds on the party leadership because of a climate of fear, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said he found Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's willingness to contest for the top post "encouraging".

"I think others should also express their views on this. At the moment, he is about the only one who is willing to speak his mind," he told reporters after

the *Look East Policy* forum

"I get this feeling that Umno leaders are afraid something might happen to them if they speak their mind and this is very unhealthy.

"There seems to be a climate of fear that you don't say anything; the leadership does not want to hear and that is why they lost the election."

Asked whether he had any message on Umno's 62nd anniversary, he quipped "happy birthday".

"The question is, if you celebrate Umno's birthday, you must stick very closely to the principles on which it was

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founded - a democratic organisation.

"Its leaders are supposed to be chosen by the members but here we see every effort is made to prevent its members from even holding an extraordinary general meeting, even suggesting that we should do away with certain parts of the constitution," he said, referring to the 30% quota (60 divisions) to nominate a presidential candidate.

Asked whether he was invited to the anniversary celebrations at the PWTC yesterday, he answered in the affirmative but added: "I think I am busy with a lot of other things."