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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad claimed he has no intention to destroy Umno.

Dr Mahathir said at his age, the last thing he wanted to worry about was politics but the present situation worried him.

"I had plenty of opportunity to destroy Umno, but I never did so," he said at a meet-and-greet session with 300 Kedah Umno members at the Islamic Art Museum here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said he had the opportunity to bail out of Umno when the party was at its weakest in 1998 and the country was just coming out of an economic crisis.



"Instead, I chose to stay on and help to strengthen the party and the country until we were doing well in 2002 before I stepped down.

"I worked hard to build the party. Why would I want to destroy it?"

Dr Mahathir urged all Umno members to set aside their differences and unite to strengthen Umno.

He stressed that the Malays must remain in power and, therefore, it was crucial to ensure Umno continued to lead the country.

Present at the event were Umno veteran Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Tamrin Ghafar Baba, former Batu Kawan Umno division vice-chief Datuk Seri Khairuddin Abu Hassan and former Umno members Datuk Hamidah Osman and Anina Saadudin.

Meanwhile, Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Salleh Sald Keruak said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak did not take sole credit for the nation's growth.

"The president didn't take credit. (In his speech), he said the country's achievements were the achievement of the party and the government.

"Najib is the leader and like it or not, we cannot separate the government from its leaders."

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin said Najib should receive due credit for the success that the country had enjoyed.

He said although the country's achievements were a collective effort of the party, its leadership and the government, the prime minister should be given credit as the leader.

"He is the leader, the president of Umno.

"So, whatever successes that Umno and the government have enjoyed while Najib is (party) president and prime minister, he is responsible for them."