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All smiles: Dr Mahathir and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali attending the opening of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur. — Bernama

Criticising Najib doesn't mean destroying Umno, says Dr M

CRITICISING the Umno president does not equate to destroying the party, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said he had analysed Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's presidential address at the Umno general assembly.

"Generally, it's meant to show that his critics are people who want to destroy Umno - and the critics he meant are me, Muhyiddin, Shapie Apdal and other brave leaders," he said, referring to Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yasin and vice-president Datuk Seri Shapie Apdal.

Speaking at an event yesterday, Dr Mahathir said if he had wanted to destroy Umno, he could easily have done so during his tenure as party president.

"But I did not. Instead, we won a two-thirds majority in the elections many times over.

"If I wanted to destroy Umno, that time when we had a financial crisis, when we were almost bankrupt - I could have gone on pension," he said.

He added that the Malaysia Development Berhad issue involved the Prime Minister.

"If he wants to clear his name, just release the report by Bank Negara and let the rakyat decide. No one knows where the report is now," said Dr Mahathir.

"If we act, if not to destroy Umno - if to help Umno. As long as he's there, Umno is not safe."

When asked if present events would lead to a repeat of the party's 1987 crisis when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah challenged him for the presidency, Dr Mahathir merely said "that was different".

"I let the members decide. Though I very nearly lost, the fact is that I won. This man won't allow any challenge because he is afraid to lose," he said.

He also claimed Najib had restructured the party voting system so that only divisional votes counted.

"Before this, representatives attending the general assembly would decide who won (the party elections).

"There are only 191 divisions, so he has reduced the number of people voting from 2,000 to 190. He then controls the whole thing," said Dr Mahathir.