

Don't gamble future away, , warns Dr M

By Nor Hawa Yunus

SUBANG, Sun. -- Umno president **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** today reminded the people to use democracy wisely and not allow themselves to be swayed by personal gain in electing leaders.

The Prime Minister said they must not "pawn their destiny" but always have the future of the country at heart.

Democracy alone cannot determine the well-being of the nation, he said but what was important was the people's wisdom is using the system.

"The outcome will be good, if we know how to use the system," he said, noting that every system, even the feudal system, had its good points. It was human weaknesses that made the system bad.

Opening the Puchong Umno delegates' conference here, Dr Mahathir said although the **democratic** system allowed the

people to determine their own fate, they sometimes allowed themselves to be influenced by the power they possessed, resulting in the selection of a bad administration.

For example, during elections, he said, the people made absurd demands, and political parties, in turn, made bad promises in their efforts to win support.

Character

Some resort to vote buying to obtain votes and the people, who allow themselves to be influenced by greed, would support these candidates to administer the country.

"Because there are some who are not efficient in determining what is good and what is not, and are only concerned with personal gain, we will get bad leaders whose notion is that by buying votes they can grab power to achieve

something for themselves.*

He said if the people pawned their future out of selfishness, they would lose although they live in a **democratic** system. This is because they will be deprived of a good Government which could have brought meaningful benefits.

Dr Mahathir said the same applied to Umno, and its members must place the interest of the party, **Malays** and country above everything else.

"What is important is in our hearts, whether we join the party to get positions or because we want to contribute to the struggle to make the Malays and the country more progressive."

He also reiterated his advice to Umno divisions to avoid contests for top posts as it was the party that was supreme and not the candidates

Dr Mahathir pointed out that there were times when there was not much difference between candidates.

He feared the Malay character of being loyal to a certain leader, even if the leader has lost, would lead to Umno becoming weak.

"This makes it very difficult to close ranks after elections. If it is not necessary to change the leadership, we should not. It is better to have the devil we know than the angel we don't," he said.

Earlier, Seiangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad bin Haji Muhammad Taib, who is the pro tern chairman of the division, said the country needed Dr Mahathir's leadership.

He said under the leadership of Dr Mahathir, the country was now well-known and respected by the world community.