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Mahathir-Umno

ANWAR HAS TO DECIDE FOR HIMSELF WHETHER TO CONTEST, SAYS MAHATHIR

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93
KUALA LUMPUR, May 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has to decide for himself whether he wants to contest the party deputy presidency in November.

"It is his right to make a decision...if he does not want to contest, then he does not contest, if he wants to contest, then it is up to him to contest," he told reporters at the airport on his return from Seoul where he had addressed a forum of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC).

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, was asked to comment on Anwar's recent statement that he had no intention of challenging incumbent Encik Ghafar Baba for the post of deputy president.

Anwar had also reportedly said that he would abide by the decision of the party.

Following the Finance Minister's statement, another vice-president Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is Foreign Minister, called on party members not to force Anwar to contest the deputy presidency. -- more

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Abdullah had called on Umno members to allow Ghafar to retain his post. Ghafar, however, has yet to state whether he intended to defend the deputy presidency which he had won in a contest with former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam in 1987.

Asked whether the statements of the two vice-presidents reflected a "debate" in Umno, Dr Mahathir replied: "There is no debate. Maybe Datuk Abdullah wants to advise Umno members. It is up to Umno members whether they want to accept the advice or not." -- Bernama

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