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Mahathir-Cabinet

PM SAYS NO PLAN TO RESHUFFLE CABINET

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he does not intend to reshuffle his present Cabinet although several ministers were defeated in today's Umno Supreme Council elections.

Dr Mahathir, who is the Umno president, said the results of the elections did not necessarily mean the losers must be dropped and the winners be given positions.

"In this sort of contest, there will be winners and losers. Although this (the election results) in some ways will influence our thinking, I have no plan to make any changes at this time," he told a news conference at the end of the first day of the Umno General Assembly at Dewan Merdeka in the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Yesterday, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz failed to retain her Wanita Umno head post, losing in the contest to Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail lost in her bid for the Wanita number two post but she won a seat on the Supreme Council today.

In the election for Umno Youth head, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa was unsuccessful while Parliamentary Secretary in the International Trade and Industry Ministry Datuk Hishamuddin Tun Hussein won the Youth vice head post.

The new Youth head is Bagan Datoh MP Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. He defeated former Melaka Chief Minister and incumbent Youth head Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik, Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad and Abdul Rahman Mat Salleh.

In the vice-presidential election today, Minister of Youth and Sports Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin failed to retain his post.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and Yob Tajuddin Kulub Ismail were the other unsuccessful V-P candidates.

In the election of 25 ordinary members of the Supreme Council, among the ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries who lost are Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Land and Cooperative Development Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Datuk Fauzi Abdul Rahman, Deputy Works Minister Datuk Railey Haji Jeffrey and Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan.

Dr Mahathir said there would always be winners and losers in any contest.

"The position of cabinet ministers who lost will not be affected because in the past there had also been ministers who lost," he said.

He also denied rumours that Rafidah had already tendered her resignation as minister after losing to Dr Siti Zaharah.

"She merely handed me the letter last night to say that that she could not attend the Supreme Council meeting. Because she has no position, she did not attend the meeting today. There is no resignation letter," Dr Mahathir said when asked on the two letters sent by Rafidah to him before the Supreme Council meeting began last night.

Asked whether he was happy with the choice made by the delegates this time, he said: "I am prepared to work with anybody who were chosen. As for me, what had been decided by the delegates is fine by me."

"It is not I who made the choice. I have the right to increase the

membership of the Supreme Council with the people of my choice and I will consider that but this (the election result) is the choice of the delegates and I accept. I'm not happy, I'm not sad, it's their choice," he added.

On the defeat of Rafidah and Abdul Rahim, he said it was the choice of the delegates and he believed that they had their reasons for changing the leadership of their respective movements.

Dr Mahathir however did not discount the possibility that his policy speech this morning had to some extent influenced the result of the election today.

"I think there are certain changes. The speech this morning possibly had its effects although I cannot confirm this because it is also possible that some of those elected have their sins, we don't know," he said.

This morning, he reminded delegates, among others, of the need to reject corrupt candidates because if they were chosen, such candidates were bound to abuse their power to get more money to accommodate the needs of their supporters.

When asked if any of the winners had indulged in practices prohibited by the party, Dr Mahathir said: "I have not checked yet, but I think there is none."

However, Dr Mahathir assured that action would still be taken if there were evidence that they had breached party regulations like campaigning, using money to buy votes and abusing their power.

He said that during the debate, delegates appeared to be keen for him to fulfil his pledge to take action against candidates who breached the rules even after they had won.

"I have to check first then only we can ascertain whether the candidates were truly clean," he added.

Asked what will happen if almost everyone who had won had breached the party directive, he said: "If everyone, of course everyone (will be dropped)."

The slots for those who are dropped would be filled by the candidates who lost but who obtained the nearest number of votes received by those who won, he said. -- BERNAMA

AH/ZAB/RON AO