

10/02/1998

Ramli: Ensure there won't be challenges

IPOH, Mon. - State Umno liaison chief Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib today advised Umno members against challenging existing division chiefs at the divisional elections next month.

He said although there was nothing to stop members from doing so, those contemplating vying for the posts should take seriously the no-contest advice from party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Ramli said this when asked to comment about the possibility of certain members in Perak contesting for the top post during the forthcoming divisional elections.

"I am advising them to heed the Prime Minister's advice.

"Wherever possible, there should not be contests because at this moment we are facing other pressing problems which need our attention," said Ramli, who is also the Menteri Besar.

During a meeting with Kelantan Umno last month, Dr Mahathir, who is also Kelantan Umno liaison committee chairman, had said the 14 division chief posts in Kelantan should not be contested except for Gua Musang where the post was expected to be taken over by its MP and former Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

Kelantan Umno had regarded this as a directive while several State Umnos had supported it.

In Kangar, Perlis Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim warned the State's incumbent party leaders and aspiring candidates not to use his name to attract voters.

Shahidan, also the Menteri Besar, said he did not give his blessing to those eyeing certain positions in the three divisions although they would not be stopped from contesting.

"It is the new blood's right to offer themselves for any party post.

"A contest is within the democratic spirit of the party but I must clarify that I have not endorsed any candidate," he told reporters at his office today.

Shahidan said he was concerned about a possible split in the party. He did not anticipate a contest for the top two posts in the Kangar and Arau divisions but several people, he added, had expressed interest in the top two positions in the Padang Besar division.

The incumbents in Padang Besar are Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid and State Assembly Speaker Datuk Bahari Taib.

In Kota Kinabalu, the Sabah Umno liaison committee today unanimously decided that there should be no contest for all elected posts in the 20 Umno divisions.

For divisional Youth chiefs who are no longer eligible to hold the post, a successor should be appointed based on consensus among officials at the divisional level.

Umno divisions in Sabah are scheduled to hold AGMs between March 16 and March 31.

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