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Respect 'no contest' advice, says Dr Mahathir

Badrul Hisham Mahzan; Tony Emmanuel

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the the advice of a "no contest" for posts of divisional chiefs involving supreme council members should be respected.

Dr Mahathir said he would feel disappointed if the advice was not followed.

Speaking at a Press conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting tonight, the Prime Minister said: "However, this is not a directive. It's an advice. But I will be disappointed if it is not followed."

He was asked for his views on the advice which has led to numerous interpretations among Umno members in the past few weeks.

The supreme council had at its last meeting on Dec 21 decided that supreme council members who were not divisional chiefs could not challenge incumbents for the posts.

Likewise, divisional chiefs who are supreme council members should also not be challenged. Asked for his views on Kelantan where a contest for the Peringat division was seen developing, the decision of "no contest" should be viewed as "a presidential advice".

In Peringat, supreme council member Datuk Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir who was seen to mount a challenge against the incumbent, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, would now be deputy chief.

In the case of the Gua Musang division, the incumbent head has decided to make way for Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and would now move aside to become deputy divisional chief.

To a question whether he would be disappointed if the advice was ignored by Kelantan Umno or others, Dr Mahathir said that it applied to all.

Asked whether the advice should be extended to all divisions, he said: "Our advice is that, as far as possible, there should be no contest. But, if there are contests, it should not lead to disunity among the members."

Asked whether the supreme council was aware that some contenders may have resorted to using newly-published tabloids to further their political campaign, Dr Mahathir said the party's technical committee would investigate the matter.

Asked on steps to be taken to help in revitalising the economy, Dr Mahathir said that enhanced co-operation between Asean member countries and Japan would help overcome the economic problems.

Dr Mahathir said it could not be assumed that the Malaysian economy was picking up as the ringgit was still volatile.

He said discussions with Asean leaders were continuing on several co-operative measures.

On the savings campaign to assist the Government's efforts to revive the economy, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the Internal Revenue Board was authorised to collect donations.

Dr Mahathir advised those who wished to sell their jewellery or gold to sell them abroad and bring back the money to invest in Malaysia.

"If the women were to offer their gold for sale on the local market, this would mean that Malaysians themselves would have to make the purchase using the ringgit."

He said selling the gold locally would not mean that liquidity of the local financial system would increase.

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