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`Undemocratic to make permanent no-contest ruling for top posts'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The no-contest ruling for the posts of Umno president and deputy president imposed during the 1996 general assembly will not be institutionalised.

Secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said Umno has no intention of making permanent the ruling or enforcing it during the next election in 1999.

The decision was adopted by the Umno General Assembly in 1995.

The assembly then resolved to maintain and continue with the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as president and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as deputy president of Umno until the 1999 elections.

Sabbaruddin said this when asked whether the party will institutionalise the no-contest rule for the top two positions for next year's elections.

"It is undemocratic if we make it a permanent ruling. Even during the 1996 general assembly, Dr Mahathir had said that he is willing to contest for his post in the next party elections."

Sabbarrudin had earlier launched Malaysia Airlines' Showcase Malaysia phase 2.

Asked whether the Supreme Council will propose a resolution on this, he said the question does not arise as all divisions had given their full support to Dr Mahathir.

Sabbaruddin said all divisions in the respective States had pledged undivided support for Dr Mahathir and will re-nominate him in next year's election.

"Therefore, if there is only one candidate for the president post, the question of contest does not arise," he said.

On whether the party will take any action against an Umno branch chairman and two Umno division members who were fined for gambling in a hotel room, he said they will look into the matter closely.

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