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Overhaul candidate selection procedure, says Rais

SEREMBAN, Sun. - Umno's current system of choosing election candidates should be overhauled, in order to ensure that party candidates have the unequivocal support of its grassroots.

Respected political analyst and newly elected MP for Jelebu, Datuk Dr Rais Yatim, said the Umno constitution, with regard to the system of choosing candidates, had to be amended to make the system more transparent and accepted by all party members.

Rais was commenting on the view that the main reason for the defeat of Umno candidates and reduced majorities of winning candidates, in some States in the recent elections, was improper choice of candidates.

"Under the Umno constitution it is stipulated that among the duties of party divisions was to submit proposals for election candidates.

"This means that Umno divisions have the right to propose names for election candidates to be used by the State Liaison Committee, in deciding on its choice of candidates."

Dr Rais said while the lists submitted by the divisions were not final and indisputable, any changes especially the inclusion of new names should only be done following discussions between the State Liaison Committee and the respective divisions.

"On the contrary, if the State leadership just proceeds to submit a different list from that proposed by the divisions to the Umno president, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it would definitely impinge on the sensitivities of the grassroots.

"What's more, the president himself cannot be expected to personally know every individual candidate forwarded to him, in finalising the choice."

Dr Rais said by disregarding the proposals made by the divisions in preparing its candidate list, the State Liaison Committee was guilty of creating a major problem, for the party.

"The members at the respective divisions would undoubtedly be hurt if their proposed candidates were not allowed to contest, resulting in them failing to give support to the chosen candidates."

Viewing this scenario as stabbing each other in the back, Dr Rais said, if not stopped, this could blacken Umno's future.

"I am not shy or afraid to reveal all this as I place importance on Umno's future," added Rais.

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