

Dr M: It's a good

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'Supreme council represented by the young, old and

By Nuraina Samad

KUALA LLJMPUR, Fri. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is satisfied with the selection of the three vice-presidents and 25 supreme council members, saying it represents a "good mix which the party wants."

Everyone, he said, was represented in the supreme council with the new, the young, old and once-rejected leaders.

"As usual when Umno chooses its supreme council, it gives a good mix . . . that has always been the tradition (of Umno)," he said in response to questions at a Press conference at the end of today's proceedings of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre.

On the absence of Wanita representation in the newly-elected supreme council, Dr Mahathir gave an assurance that the movement would be better represented because "they deserve it."

In the election yesterday, incumbent vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib retained their seats while Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin made a comeback by winning the third slot.

Among the elected 'supreme council members were former Umno Youth leader Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Kelantan deputy liaison chief Datuk Annuar Musa. Making a surprise comeback to mainstream Umno is Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, the Johor Baru divisional head.

None of the five Wanita Umno candidates — newly-elected Wanita deputy chief Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Datuk Paduka Zaleha Ismail, Datuk Maznah Hamid, Dr Norraesah Ahmad and Raja Ropiah Raja Abdullah — managed to

get a seat on the council.

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the combination of the three elected vice-presidents which was the same line-up the Kubang Pasu division nominated.

He said the similarity was a coincidence and he did not think they won because the Kubang Pasu division, of which he is head, had chosen them.

"It is a coincidence. I don't think it is because my division chose them," he said, adding that he did not know they had won until later.

Many interpretations were made on the election of the three, the most popular notion being that it was on the strength of the Kubang Pasu division's nomination.

On Zahid's election, Dr Mahathir said he was voted in because he is "now 100 per cent with the party".

"He has renounced his connection with former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

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and had revealed that Anwar had influenced him in making allegations (against the government)."

On whether there would be any position for former Wanita chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, Dr Mahathir said there was no decision on this.

Asked if the lineup of vice-presidents showed that the delegates followed his advice to reject candidates who practised money politics, Dr Mahathir said that as far as he

was concerned, there were no specific charges against any of the elected candidates nor was there any proof of wrongdoings although some people had made assumptions.

"I must have proof. I cannot condemn people without proof."

He also commented on the incident yesterday morning at the start of proceedings when the new Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz was jeered by some delegates as she was taking her place on stage. He said this was "unfortunate."

He said it was perhaps because some people could not accept the change in the Wanita leadership.

Dr Mahathir said this did not happen during the previous party election when a new leader took over. He expressed the hope that this would not happen again because it was not in the character of the Umno assembly.

Dr Mahathir, who had earlier met members of several overseas Umno clubs, was asked whether the students were still concerned with the Anwar issue. He said they needed

to understand the issue to be able to explain to those who confront them with allegations.

Asked if this would be his final term as Umno president, Dr Mahathir said anything was possible.

"Nobody is popular forever. I mean views may change, I don't know. I am getting old. The normal retirement age for judges is 65, I am 75, 10 years beyond already," said Dr Mahathir who was returned unopposed for another three-year term.