

Dr M: Refer allegation NST 14-3-2000 to party supreme council

By Sharif Haron and
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JOHOR BARU, Mon. — Any attempt to block the nominations of certain aspirants for the May Umno elections can be referred to the party's supreme council for action, its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said evidence should also be furnished when such matters were raised with the council.

He was asked about a statement yesterday by former party vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that 18 out of 20 divisions in Johor had been instructed by certain people not to nominate him for the third highest post.

Muhyiddin, who is Domestic

Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, had said the divisions were instead directed to nominate Johor Umno chief Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman as the sole candidate from the State for the post.

Speaking at a Press conference after opening a conference and exhibition hosted by Port of Tanjung Pelepas Sdn Bhd at a hotel here, Dr Mahathir said Muhyiddin had not informed him of the matter.

He was also asked about the statement by Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin in Jakarta on Friday that many Malaysian businessmen in the Prime Minister's delegation to Indonesia spent their time playing golf or at karaoke sessions instead of attending planned offi-

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cial briefings or meeting their Indonesian counterparts.

Dr Mahathir said it was embarrassing because when foreigners came to Malaysia, they said the (Malaysian) Ministers were only playing golf.

"When our people went there, they showed exactly that ... we play golf ... good at karaoke," he said.

In Kuala Lumpur, acting Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein asked Muhyiddin to prove his allegation.

Hishammuddin, who is Tenggara Umno division chief, said: "This is a serious allegation, which, if true, is unhealthy. I hope it is not happening in Umno."

So far, Ghani, who is also Johor Menteri Besar, has received 28 nominations for the post of vice-president.

Supreme council member Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who is also from Johor, obtained 11 nominations while Muhyiddin, who is the former Johor Umno chief and Menteri Besar, received three nominations.

Meanwhile, Johor Umno information chief Mohamed Khaled Nordin criticised Muhyiddin for alleging that Johor Umno divisions could easily be dictated to on who they should choose as candidates.

Khaled, who is also Deputy Works Minister, said:

"Johor Umno members are loyal to the party. The process of elections is to strengthen the party and Johor will choose a candidate who can best fulfil this objective.

"If the person is suitable, we will give him support no matter what."