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Dr M: Nothing can be done if advice is ignored

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LANGKAWI, Sat. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there is nothing the supreme council could do if divisions did not heed its no-contest advice for the two top posts in the May party elections. Unlike the days of British rule where advice was tantamount to an order, he said, the supreme council's advice was not a directive.

"Our advice is not a British advice (then) which must be followed. If they (the divisions) do not want to follow, we cannot do anything," he told reporters at the Langkawi International Airport before leaving after an overnight visit.

The Prime Minister said the supreme council had given the advice which it felt was best for the party.

The supreme council had resolved that Dr Mahathir be retained as party president and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi made deputy president. He, however, said he was not surprised at the Tanah Merah division's decision to nominate Kelantan Umno chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the posts of both president and deputy president.

"I am not surprised about anything," he said.

Asked if he thought the move would lead to more divisions doing the same, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know ... I don't know."

On whether the Tanah Merah division's decision would have any effect on Umno's strength, Dr Mahathir said he did not know.

"We have to see (what happens) after this," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the party leadership had already explained that the divisions were free to nominate leaders of their choice and there was no need to explain further.

Tanah Merah division chief Datuk Hashim Safin Hamzah had proposed Tengku Razaleigh's name for the two posts.

On former Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's claim that there were attempts to prevent divisions from nominating him, Dr Mahathir said he hoped they were not true.

On Muhyiddin's suggestion that the party review its constitution to address this problem, he said that could be proposed to the party.