

14 MAR 2000

Umno-Johor

FOUR DIVISION HEADS IN JOHOR REFUTE MUHYIDDIN'S CLAIM

JOHOR BAHRU, March 14 (Bernama) -- Four Umno division heads in Johor today denied there are directives by certain quarters to block nominations for Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to stand for a vice-president's post in the Umno election in May.

The four division heads who made the denial at a press conference at the Johor Menteri Besar's Office here were Adam Abdul Hamid (Senai), Othman Jais (Segamat), Datuk Mazlan Abu (Bakri) and Baharom Abdul Ghani (Gelang Patah).

Batu Pahat Umno division head Datuk Zainalabidin Mohamed Zin who was scheduled to be present at the press conference was absent.

"We did not want to make any statement initially because it is an internal problem but we were forced to come out with the statement as it has been made known to the public including comments from the party president. We feel responsible to come up with a statement," Adam said.

He said initially Johor Umno decided to nominate only Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman for the post of vice-president and this decision was arrived at during the Johor Umno Liaison meeting held before the general election in November last year.

He said the suggestion came from Mazlan but later the Johor Umno Liaison meeting decided to adopt an open stand on nominations for the vice-presidencies as there happened to be many candidates, and this decision was based on the views of Abdul Ghani who is also chairman of the Johor Umno Liaison body.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, at a media conference here, yesterday, said Muhyiddin should prove his allegation to the Supreme Council to enable it to look into the matter deeply.

Last Sunday, Muhyiddin who is also Pagoh Umno division head claimed that 16 out of the 20 Umno divisions in Johor had been directed by certain quarters against nominating him for the vice-presidency.

The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister claimed that the divisions concerned had been directed to nominate only the Menteri Besar as the sole candidate from Johor for the vice-presidency.

Apart from Abdul Ghani and Muhyiddin, another leader from Johor vying for the post of vice-president is Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar who is also deputy chairman of the Johor Umno Liaison Body and head of the Kota Tinggi Umno division.

"It's unfair of Muhyiddin to say that there are certain directives to block nominations for him," said Adam, adding that Muhyiddin's statement could give an impression to the other states that there were actually such obstructions whereas there was really no truth to it.

He said Muhyiddin should not worry about the nominations as he could obtain them from the other states and there was necessity for him to depend merely on the Johor support.

Mazlan said Johor Umno was mature and the divisions valued their integrity.

"We make our assessment based on (the candidate's) performance. Candidates from outside Johor are also contesting. If a candidate is not qualified, then he is not eligible," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MKO AO