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Gua Musang nominations rejected: Razaleigh ineligible to vie for VP

Shamsul Akmar; Patvinder Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Umno supreme council today rejected the nominations of candidates for the May 11 party election made by the Gua Musang division, thus making Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah ineligible to contest the post of vice-president.

The decision was arrived at by consensus by all council members present, including Tengku Razaleigh who is chairman of the division.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the decision to reject Gua Musang's nominations was based on the fact that it was not made by the delegates but by the divisional committee.

"Even though the Gua Musang delegates had entrusted the divisional committee (with) the task to make the nominations, we feel that this has not met the supreme council's instructions.

"We had given instructions that nominations must be made by delegates," Dr Mahathir said after chairing a three-hour supreme council meeting.

With the rejection, Tengku Razaleigh, who is Kelantan Umno chief, is left with 16 nominations, one short to qualify to vie for one of the three third highest positions in the party.

The Gua Musang division had met on March 31 where the delegates decided to leave the task of nominating candidates for all posts to its divisional committee.

On April 14, the Gua Musang committee nominated Tengku Razaleigh for the post of vice-president which unofficially provided him the much-needed nomination to qualify for contest.

Explaining the supreme council's decision to reject the Gua Musang nominations, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said he received a letter from the divisional committee on April 13.

"Due to the time factor, I brought the letter to today's meeting and the chairman (Dr Mahathir) left it to the members to discuss.

"We (the members) agreed that any decision made must be by consensus and we discussed whether the Gua Musang delegates had heeded the council's instruction when they left the task to nominate candidates to the divisional committee.

"After taking into account our advice to the Tawau division (in early March), we decided that we should not accept the Gua Musang nominations to avoid a precedent," he said.

Dr Mahathir said after the meeting by the Tawau division - the first of the 165 Umno divisions to do so - on March 2, the supreme council had directed that all divisions must nominate candidates for all posts.

"We allowed the Tawau nominations to stand as it was made before the supreme council issued the instruction," he added.

Tawau had only nominated two, instead of three, candidates for the posts of vice-president.

Dr Mahathir said with the rejection of the Gua Musang nominations, the nominations for Tengku Razaleigh and the others, including that for the president's post, were invalid.

"So, I did not get 164 nominations, only 163," he said.

Asked if Umno was not worried that certain quarters might interpret today's decision as an attempt to block Tengku Razaleigh from contesting the vice-presidency, Dr Mahathir said:

"If people want to interpret it, they will do so. What can we do. Usually they interpret it that way."

On whether the supreme council might have been ambiguous in its instruction and interpretation of the nomination process, Dr Mahathir said the interpretation of the council was final.

"As provided in Article 32 of the party constitution, the interpretation of the supreme council on matters which arise is final."

Asked why the supreme council did not direct the Gua Musang division to re-convene its delegates meeting so that it could make the nominations according to the instructions, Dr Mahathir said it was not possible.

"If we do that, then other divisions may want to hold theirs again too."

He said during the meeting, Tengku Razaleigh explained how the Gua Musang divisional committee ended up with the task of making the nominations instead of the delegates.

"He said during the division meeting, the delegates proposed that the committee make the nominations and the matter was left at that without any voting," Dr Mahathir said, adding the division could appeal against the decision.

On the position of incumbent deputy Wanita chief Datuk Napsiah Omar whose position in defending her post is uncertain following differing tallies on the nominations she received, Dr Mahathir said the matter had been left to the party's disciplinary and management committee to look into.

Napsiah needs 25 nominations to qualify to defend her post and claimed that she had the number. But the Wanita committee said she only had 24 and, therefore was not qualified to contest.

Dr Mahathir also advised delegates to reject anyone using money to buy votes in next month's party election.

"Delegates should realise whoever offers money is not fit to be a leader."

He said he knew some of the delegates to the upcoming general assembly had already approached candidates for money in return for votes.

Dr Mahathir warned them against such malpractice as it would not help the party in overcoming problems of money politics.

"Although there were allegations of money politics (throughout the divisional delegates meetings which concluded recently) we find it to be not very obvious.

"But one of the matters that I will mention in my opening speech at the Umno general assembly this year is money politics."

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