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Johor, Malacca accept 'no contest' advice

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Johor and Malacca State Umno have decided to nominate Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for the posts of party president and deputy president respectively.

In Muar, State Umno liaison chief and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman reiterated Johor Umno's pledge of support for the supreme council's 'no-contest' advice on the top two posts.

Ghani described the State Umno decision as being unanimous and aimed at promoting party unity.

"Notwithstanding this decision, the State Umno will not restrict any division or branch from nominating anyone for the top posts within the supreme council," he told reporters at the Hari Raya open house at his residence in Sungai Mati today.

Ghani advised members to evaluate potential candidates carefully before nominating them.

To date, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, both from Johor, have expressed their willingness to contest the vice-president posts.

Ghani said all 1,500 Johor Umno branches had been directed to hold their annual meetings over the six weeks from Jan 16, to be followed by divisional meetings in March.

He said Johor Umno would organise an assembly in early May, to which some 5,000 grassroots party leaders would be invited, to explain its work agenda following the Barisan Nasional's impressive showing in Johor in the general election, when it made a clean sweep of all 20 parliamentary and 40 State seats.

In Malacca, State Umno liaison chief Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Mohd Rustam, who is Chief Minister, said all five Umno divisions had accepted the supreme council decision.

He said the State party and divisional leaders accepted the supreme council's advice that the two posts be left uncontested.

The unanimous decision was reached at the State liaison committee meeting last Wednesday.

Mohd Ali said the decision would complement on-going efforts to maintain unity among party leaders and the grassroots.

"Unity is vital in order for the Malays to move further forward," he said when met at the Hari Raya open house of Jasin Umno chief Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin.

Abu Zahar, the former State Umno liaison chief, said the divisions had also agreed to nominate Mohd Ali to seek election to the supreme council.

Abu Zahar, who is Home Ministry parliamentary secretary, said a few divisions had wanted to nominate him for the post.

"However, I strongly feel that only one person, that is Mohd Ali who is more capable, should be nominated. There won't be other nominations. Mohd Ali will be the sole candidate from Malacca."

Meanwhile, Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Umno Supreme Council did not have the authority to direct Umno divisions to nominate any particular persons for top party posts.

Speaking to Bernama after celebrating Aidilfitri with the 10 Tactical personnel of the Royal Malay Regiment in Tanjung Siang, Mersing, he said the council's stand that there be no contests for the party presidency and

deputy presidency should only be regarded as an "advice and guidance" for the divisions as mentioned by Dr Mahathir.

Najib said it was up to the Umno divisions to decide whether to nominate their own candidate for the deputy president's post.

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