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Muhyiddin to meet PM today

Sharif Haron; Patrick Sennyah

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Former Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow to explain his allegation that certain people were trying to prevent divisions from nominating him and a few others to contest for the vice-presidency in the May party elections.

He said he would explain to the party president the evidence he had to back his allegation and why he could not furnish it to the supreme council.

"I will explain that giving the evidence to the supreme council may jeopardise those who gave it to me in the first place," he said.

Dr Mahathir yesterday advised Muhyiddin to refer any attempt to block the nominations of certain aspirants for the Umno elections to the supreme council, with evidence, so that proper action could be taken.

Muhyiddin, on Sunday, said 18 of 20 divisions in Johor had been instructed by certain people not to nominate him for the third highest post.

Asked why he did not refer it to the supreme council, he said it was better for him to meet the party president first, especially since he (Muhyiddin) was no longer a supreme council member.

"I made the statement because I felt such things should not happen.

We want to ensure that any process in the party is purely democratic.

"The people who gave me the information had asked me to keep it confidential and that is why I cannot openly disclose it. There is definitely proof and I will discuss it with the Prime Minister," he said.

He also said he did not wish to withdraw from contesting the post of vice-president despite having received only three nominations so far.

"There are still many divisions which are yet to make their nominations and it is still early to draw conclusions," he added.

Since divisional meetings began early this month, slightly more than a quarter of 165 divisions have held their annual delegates meetings where nominations of candidates are made.

All divisions are scheduled to complete their meetings by end of this month, except for the 11 divisions in Pahang which may shelve them to focus on the April 1 Sanggang by-election.

Muhyiddin, who is Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, did not dismiss the possibility of "some kind of barter-trade" practices among the Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers in ensuring their nominations.

He said the barter-trade system was worrying candidates, who were not Menteris Besar or Chief Ministers, especially those vying for the vice-presidency.

"My worries are equally shared by my colleagues since those who have positions (State Umno Liaison chairmen) in the party can ensure that certain candidates are nominated," he said.

To date, four Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers are among the nine aspirants for the vice-president post.

They are Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman (Johor), Datuk Abu Hassan Omar (Selangor), Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad (Negri Sembilan) and Datuk Seri Osu Sukam (Sabah).

Muhyiddin said the present system of attaining a certain number of nominations before contesting party posts should be re-examined to give those capable a chance to contest.

In Johor Baru, four Umno division heads, at a joint Press conference today, said there was no truth in the allegation that Johor Umno divisions had been directed to nominate Abdul Ghani only for the vice-presidency. The four are Adam Abdul Hamid (Senai), Datuk Mazlan Abu (Bakri), Othman Jais (Segamat) and Baharom Abdul Ghani (Gelang Patah).

Adam said if not for other commitments more division heads would have been present at the Press conference.

"I feel sad because there should not be such claim (by Muhyiddin). The reality in politics is that we must accept the decision of the members.

"We in Johor are in a dilemma because we have three aspirants for vice-president. If we promote all three, they will all lose. The reality is that we need support from other States too.

"We feel responsible about coming up with our statements today because the issue has been publicised and the Prime Minister has also commented."

Mazlan said delegates to divisional meetings were mature, and knew how to assess and choose their leaders.

"Those from other States can also lead Umno. We are talking about Umno, not Johor leadership," he added.

Baharom said delegates to Gelang Patah divisional meeting on March 19 would have the freedom to nominate whoever they like for all party posts.

"We will do a secret balloting. We did not get any directive to block any proposal," he added.

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