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No-contest move not mandatory

Zubaidah Abu Bakar

ALOR STAR, Wed. - Umno members are not forced to adopt the party supreme council's no-contest advice for the posts of party president and deputy president in the party elections in May, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said it was a decision made by the council and the members had the right not to abide by it.

"It was the supreme council's decision. It was not me who made the decision.

"People can say what they like (about the decision)... if they do not want to listen, then don't...

"If they do not want to heed the advice, it is all right... this is the council's advice, not mine," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Prime Minister, was commenting on the mixed reactions from grassroots members on the supreme council's no-contest decision published in Berita Harian today.

Among the opponents were members from Johor, Negri Sembilan and Terengganu.

Asked for his reaction on the comments, the Umno president said: "No reaction.

"We only advise, if they do not want to listen it is their right," he said when pointed out that there were also allegations that the decision was undemocratic.

Kampung Pasir Lama, Tampoi, branch leader Abdul Kayon Abdul Sutan, 51, had questioned the stand.

He said if the two posts were not open to contest, it would look as though there was no democracy in Umno.

Labu Jaya Kampung LBJ branch leader Norman Mohd Nor shared Abdul Kayon's view.

Another leader, Zamri Mohamaed from Umno Pasoh I felt the posts should be contested to gauge grassroot support of the respective leaders.

An Umno member from Marang, Hasmadi Embong said members should be allowed to choose.

Dr Mahathir spoke to reporters upon arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport for a short visit to the State today.

He later broke fast with villagers at Kampung Bukit mosque in Hosba, Kubang Pasu.

The council which adopted the stand at its meeting on Monday also proposed that Dr Mahathir be renominated to the presidency and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi nominated for the number two post.

It also resolved to advise Umno divisions not to submit other nominations for the two posts.

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob had said that State Umno liaison committee chairmen would advise their divisions holding delegates' meetings to abide by the stand taken by the supreme council.

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