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Proposal by five division heads to avert split in party ranks

IPOH, Fri. - Five Umno division leaders have proposed that divisions be prevented from nominating candidates for the three vice-presidents' posts.

They said the aspirants should instead register themselves at the Umno headquarters as practised during the 1996 party election.

The five leaders are Mohd Isa Ismail (Bukit Gantang), Senator Mustafa Kamal Nawi (Gopeng), Datuk Hamdi Abu Bakar (Bruas), Datuk Zaim Abu Hassan (Parit), and Mohamad Yusof Kassim (Batu Gajah).

Yusof, who is representing the five, said today the aspirants must also meet certain criteria before they could offer themselves as candidates.

Among the criteria, they proposed that candidates must hold the posts of ministers, deputy ministers, chief ministers, menteri besar and supreme council members.

Yusof said their proposal would be forwarded to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to be tabled at the supreme council meeting.

Such a mechanism was to prevent a possible split in the party since too many leaders had offered themselves for the posts, he said.

Besides incumbents Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, 10 others have expressed their willingness to contest for the vice-presidents' posts.

Another incumbent Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is going for the deputy president's post.

He said any nomination at the divisional level would cause tension and this would be against the code of ethics issued by the supreme council.

He also said the supreme council should ensure that the posts of president and deputy president would not be contested.

He said the council should reject nominations for other than Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for the two top positions.

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