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Rais: Prejudices can be avoided through secret ballot method

MALACCA, Tues. - Umno member Datuk Dr Rais Yatim today said "a lot of prejudices can be avoided" if the secret ballot is employed when nominating candidates for party posts or choosing delegates to its May general assembly.

"Secret ballot should be conducted as it is something truly democratic," said Rais, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

Speaking to reporters at a high-tea organised by the Persatuan Anak Negeri Sembilan at the Ayer Keroh De Village near here, Rais, however, said:

"The procedure must be observed carefully and the observers must be people of neutral standing. If this can be done, I think a lot of prejudices can be avoided."

Also present were former Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik and former State Assembly Speaker Datuk Nasir Manap.

"My personal feeling is that secret ballot is good ... it is in line with the democratic process. Umno should follow it."

Rais added: "But, of course, if the divisions decide not to have the system but prefer to choose candidates by a show of hands, that is also all right.

"The only thing is that an element of prejudice can be involved as the leadership in the division will know the vote goes to whom."

Commenting on the statement by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that it was up to party divisions whether to conduct secret ballots or not, Rais said: "What the Prime Minister said is logical and correct. It is up to the divisions to decide on the procedure to adopt."

Dr Mahathir had said several divisions, including Kubang Pasu (of which he is the head) had conducted secret ballots.

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