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Mahathir-Ku Li

SUPREME COUNCIL LAUDS KU LI'S "NO CONTEST" STATEMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he believed Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah would stick to his statement not to contest for the Umno president and deputy president's posts in the May party elections.

The Prime Minister and Umno president said the supreme council welcomed his statement considered to be in line with Razaleigh's position as a member of the council which had issued a no-contest advice for the top two posts.

"We welcome the statement as he is also a supreme council member. The council has made a unanimous decision that the two posts should not be contested," he said when asked to comment on a report in Utusan Malaysia today that Razaleigh had no intention to vie for the top two positions.

"I believe he will stick to his statement," he told a media conference after chairing the supreme council meeting at Umno headquarters, here.

Dr Mahathir also said it was not true that he adopted an open attitude that the deputy president's post could be contested while the president be returned unopposed.

"This is not true because as a supreme council member I'm also bound by its decision. The council advised there should be no contest for the president and deputy president's posts. This means I also advise there should be no contest," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was very regrettable if it was said that he had agreed the president's post need not be contested while the deputy presidency could be contested as it meant he was protecting himself.

"That's not my intention. It's not true that I've an open stand. I stick to the supreme council's decision that the two posts be unopposed. It's an advice from the council and also from me," he said.

Asked on the feelings at the grassroots that the Number Two post should be contested as there was a vacancy and vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was merely discharging the duties of the deputy president, he said indeed there were such opinions.

He said a similar situation also prevailed when he was performing the duties of the deputy president.

"When Tun Hussein Onn appointed me as the Deputy Prime Minister, I was also an Umno vice-president but was treated like Umno deputy president although I was not holding that post," he said.

He said he was the only candidate for the post during the party elections and was elected unopposed.

"What's Pak Lah is going through now is not something unusual," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the council also discussed party election activities and was satisfied with the campaigns being carried out as they were not too intense.

On reports that Group A government officers were allowed to be active in politics, he said, Umno had never made such a stand but instead abided by the government's regulations barring category A officers from active politics.

"Statements that Umno wanted Group A officers to be active in politics are not true and baseless. It's not a supreme council decision," he said.

On Feb 10, Utusan Malaysia front-paged a report, quoting sources, that the supreme council had agreed that the government relaxed the ruling.

Dr Mahathir also advised delegates attending the Umno General Assembly in May not to meet candidates vying for party posts to get something, promise to support and vote for them.

-- BERNAMA

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