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Mahathir-Umno

SUPREME COUNCIL STICKING TO ITS NO-CONTEST STAND - MAHATHIR

ALOR SETAR, Feb 28 (Bernama) -- The Umno Supreme Council is holding on to its stand that there be no contest for the party presidency and deputy presidency despite differing opinions on the matter among some party leaders who are not council members, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the council was sticking to its advice that there be no contest for the top two posts because it was unhealthy for the party.

"The party's interests is better taken care of if there is no contest," he told reporters at Sultan Abdul Halim Airport near here at the end of his one-day visit to Kedah.

The prime minister and Umno president said this when asked for his comment on the differing views on the subject among Umno leaders who do not sit in the Supreme Council.

The council had come up with the advice to prevent a split among Umno members as a result of a keen contest as had happened in 1987.

Two former Umno deputy presidents, Tun Ghafar Baba and Tan Sri Musa Hitam, are among those who have stated their preference for a contest for the top two posts to maintain democracy in the party.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident that the Supreme Council stand was backed by party members, including at the grassroot level, based on the feedback he received.

Replying to another question, he said Umno would conduct courses for new and young members to return to the original Umno spirit of struggling for the religion, race and nation.

"This rejuvenation course is aimed at ensuring that they are loyal to Umno and not just to any particular individual. We want to create leaders who struggle for the religion, race and nation and not for personal interests," he said.

On his meeting with former Umno elected representatives from Kedah this morning, Dr Mahathir said he advised them to continue serving the party.

"They must be willing to carry out duties and work hard to restrengthen Umno," he said.

This, he said, was because the opposition had during the last general election succeeded in getting the people to hate the government and ignore Islamic teachings that call on followers to be thankful for what they received.

"Umno members should get the people to return to the real teachings of Islam," said Dr Mahathir.

He added that the people should check what the opposition said, especially to see if it deviated from Islamic teachings.

-- BERNAMA

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