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Umno divisions must nominate all posts

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THE Umno Supreme Council has decided that all divisions should not leave council posts without a nominated candidate for the party's upcoming elections in May.

Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said all divisions yet to hold their meetings must ensure they submit nominations for the posts of president, deputy president, three vice presidents and 25 Supreme Council members.

The decision comes in the wake of Tawau Umno division's decision to nominate only two candidates for the three vice-president's posts. The division nominated Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam and Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad.

Speaking at a press conference after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the Tawau division's nomination still stands as it does not contravene any provision in the party's constitution.

"Nevertheless, the Supreme Council feels other divisions should nominate in full. This is also required of the Kubang Pasu division (which Dr Mahathir heads) which previously did not nominate anyone. Now Kubang Pasu needs to make nominations, including for the posts of president and deputy president," he added.

In previous Umno annual general meetings, the Kubang Pasu Umno division has abstained from nominating anyone for any party post. This was to avoid it being construed as a directive from the party president.

Dr Mahathir said the council's advice that there should be no contest for these top two posts means that divisions should nominate the incumbent (Dr Mahathir) and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who has been carrying out the duties of Umno deputy president.

"The divisions must still nominate (candidates for the top two posts). A no-contest does not mean they should not nominate anyone at all," he said.

Asked whether divisions need to know whether a candidate wants to contest in the party elections for the divisions to nominate the person, Dr Mahathir said that is not necessary.

"They can nominate. If the person nominated does not want to contest, he can make a statement that he does not want to, either now or after he waits to see if other divisions nominate him as well," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a candidate, after realising that not enough divisions have nominated him, may decide not to contest.

Umno secretary general Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob added: "After we receive all the nominations, Umno headquarters will contact all candidates concerned and ask them whether they accept the nominations or not. They will have to give an official answer."

Dr Mahathir said the Supreme Council also directed preparations to be made for the Sanggang by-election in Pahang. The Barisan Nasional campaign will be directed by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, while Khalil will lead the BN central committee.

The by-election follows the death of its State Assemblyman Datuk Abdullah Kia on February 26.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said after meeting party division heads and getting valuable feedback, he has decided to have meetings with state Wanita and Youth chiefs and other state party leaders to get more information on the state of the party.

Asked if such meetings go against the party's code of ethics on campaigning for the Umno elections since he is also a candidate, Dr Mahathir said:

"We will not discuss at all about campaigning, but rather about restoring the party. I want to hear from them what problems they feel exist in the party, so that I can take note and use the information to strengthen the party."

Asked whether the Government has done any study on the possible negative impact of programmes aired on Astro, the Prime Minister said so far it is listening to people's views through the media.

"If it is a problem that the people have strong feelings about, we will see if there is something we can do," he added.

On the Malacca State Government's decision to terminate the contracts of their panel doctors and lawyers who are aligned with the opposition, Dr Mahathir said:

"That is the right of the (State) Government. Panel members are appointed, and the Government for whatever reason can end their contracts. We find that in one East Coast state, the Government there has terminated (the contracts of) many people, but not many comments have been made."

Meanwhile, Abdullah, who is also chairman of Umno's disciplinary committee, said the Supreme Council has endorsed the committee's recommendation to expel 126 members who worked against Umno in the recent general elections.

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