

21 FEB 2000

Mahathir-Vote

UP TO UMNO MEMBERS TO DETERMINE NEED FOR SECRET BALLOT

SHAH ALAM, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it is up to the party divisions concerned to decide whether there is a need for a secret vote when nominating delegates to the Umno general assembly and candidates for party elections in May.

"This is up to the divisions. Those preferring secret vote can to do that," said the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir was reacting to Kelantan Umno liaison chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's proposal on the secret vote when approached by reporters after opening the Ericsson plant here today.

Dr Mahathir said secret voting has always been the practice in divisions such as the Kubang Pasu Umno division which he heads.

"We jot down on a slip of paper and we don't know who gets picked. That's in my division. I don't know about the others," said Dr Mahathir.

Asked on standardising the divisional election process as proposed by Tengku Razaleigh, Dr Mahathir said: "This he can bring up to the Umno Supreme Council and the Supreme Council can consider."

Deputy Prime Minister and Umno vice president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday proposals relating to procedures involving party divisions and branches have to submitted to the council.

Dr Mahathir advised divisions holding delegates meeting starting March 1 to put the party first.

"We have always emphasised that the party is uppermost. People in the party are insignificant, they die eventually. We cannot bury the party, We want to party to live on," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Umno branch meetings had gone on well.

"I see that Umno members are enthusiastic," Dr Mahathir added.

Meanwhile in BUTTERWORTH, also reacting to Razaleigh's proposal, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said Umno members were matured enough to decide whether they preferred secret or open balloting in party elections.

There was no need to raise the question of voting methods that Umno divisions should adopt, said Rafidah who has offered to be nominated to challenge incumbent Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman for the women's wing top post.

Rafidah told reporters this after opening a new annex of the Penfibre factory.

-- BERNAMA

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