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Umno-Rich

BARRING THE RICH FROM CONTESTING PLAN NEEDS FURTHER STUDY, SAYS NAJIB

SUBANG JAYA, April 22 (Bernama) -- A proposal to bar the very rich from contesting for posts in Umno needs to be studied in detail by the party's Supreme Council, said Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said this is to ensure that no problem would arise if the plan is adopted.

"I am sure the party president (and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) made the proposal due to his concerns over developments in the party, particularly money politics," he said after opening the Subang Umno division delegates conference here today.

"The proposal thus needs a thorough study, such as the definition of rich and the justification for such a move."

Najib, who is Defence Minister, said money politics will not only destroy the credibility and image of the party but prevent the rise of the second echelon leaders as well.

Dr Mahathir, in making the proposal in Jitra yesterday, said it was to ensure that the very rich would not use money to buy votes in order to become leaders.

In the Subang Umno division elections, incumbent Datuk Mohamed Mokhtar Ahmad Dahalan was returned unopposed as the division chief and his deputy, Yahaya Bujang, was also returned unopposed.

In KLANG, Umno Information chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Dr Mahathir's proposal for the very rich to be barred from contesting for top posts in the party was meant to protect the party's image.

He said this is to avoid Umno leaders as being seen as coming only from the very rich group.

"This image of party leaders being from the very rich group is a new development," he said when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's proposal.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Klang Umno division delegates conference here today, Mustapa said such a move would also counter the perception that becoming a party leader was a "passport" to riches.

"Money politics will only destroy the party," he said.

He also said the proposal was an approach that grassroot members have been waiting for.

In KUALA LUMPUR, People's Progressive Party (PPP) president Senator Datuk M Kayveas said Dr Mahathir's proposal should be adopted by other parties as well.

"The PPP has gone through similar experience...when a corporate figure joined the party, he wanted straightaway to be made the deputy president and later the president.

"We have had a six-year experience with such a group," he told reporters after opening the Seputeh Umno division delegates conference here today.

In KOTA TINGGI, Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the party needs to curb other negative traits in the party as well.

Other than money politics, he said abuses that some members had indulged in include corruption, poison-pen letters and misuse of power.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Tenggara Umno division delegates conference here today, he said the party president's proposal indicated his determination to weed out money politics.

Hishammuddin, who is Youth and Sports Minister, said: "Umno is a democratic party, it is open to all whether rich or poor".

"Money politics will also turn the younger generation off politics," he said.

In IPOH, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali said Umno needed to have members coming from every level of society.

However, he said the party would not want to have the very rich buying their way to power.

"Still, there are many of the rich members who are where they are now without having to resort to the use of money," he said after hosting a get-together with orphans and special children at his residence here today.

"Barring the rich from holding important party posts, just for the sake of it, will not work in the party's favour," he said.

He said one who has served the party long and well, and is rich as well, should not be denied the right to run for positions in the party.

In Petaling Jaya, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said the Supreme Council should come up with a mechanism to determine who among the members are considered rich.

"The problem is to determine the definitions of rich and moderately rich," he told reporters after opening the Segambut Umno Division meeting today.

Rais said Dr Mahathir's proposal should be carefully studied as it was a clear warning that Umno could not treat the issue of money politics lightly.

"Well, I think largely the public, especially the Umno public, welcome this...something which ought to be received," he said.

He also urged Umno members to give their cooperation to the Anti-Corruption Agency in its investigation into several cases of money politics in the party.

-- BERNAMA
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