

20/04/2003

Pendang wants Dr M as Umno chief after October

Abdul Razak Ahmad

PENDANG, Sat. - Pendang Umno division wants Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to be retained as Umno president after he steps down as prime minister in October.

The division passed the motion without debate at its annual general meeting today.

Pendang Umno division head Datuk Othman Abdul said the resolution indicated the members' affection for the prime minister.

"This is because Dr Mahathir was once our Member of Parliament for Kota Star Selatan, which then covered the district of Pendang.

"Although he lost in 1969, he still has many supporters here."

Dr Mahathir first contested as a parliamentary candidate in the April 1964 election where he won the Kota Star Selatan constituency with 4,210 votes against Mohd Shaari Abd Shukor of Pas.

He lost the seat in the following general election in May 1969. He was defeated by Yusof Rawa of Pas by 989 votes.

Dr Mahathir contested again in 1974 in the Kubang Pasu constituency. He won uncontested, and has retained the seat in subsequent general elections in 1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, 1995 and 1999.

"Pendang Umno members remember his many contributions. They feel that his services are still needed," said Othman.

Othman added that Dr Mahathir was also once an Umno branch vice chief in Pendang in 1969.

On the possibility that the motion might be misinterpreted as the division not wanting deputy Umno president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to become the party leader, Othman, who is Pendang MP, said:

"We know that Dr Mahathir will resign (as prime minister). Our delegates merely suggested that he continues as party president."

The resolution, which implores Umno to retain Dr Mahathir as the party leader after he steps down as prime minister, was among 174 accepted by the delegates without debate. Pendang Umno division, which has 89 branches, submitted 179 motions.

The motion urging Dr Mahathir to continue as party president was proposed by the Kampung Bendang Raja, Kampung Kubang Anak Gajah and Kampung Paya Saga Umno branches.

The meeting today was officiated by Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz.

Nazri, who is Chenderoh division head, had on April 7 during his division's AGM declared support for Datuk Seri Najib Razak to be made deputy Umno president and deputy prime minister when Abdullah becomes prime minister.

Nazri later clarified that he had made the statement in his personal capacity as division head.

The Tawau Umno division last week passed a resolution calling on Dr Mahathir to withdraw his decision to step down as prime minister and Umno president.

Division head Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh said Dr Mahathir's dynamic, pragmatic and visionary leadership was still needed in the wake of developments in the world.

Tawau Umno, Ghapur said, felt that Malaysia still needed his leadership and guidance.