

PM dismisses Shahrir's proposal

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Umno acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tonight dismissed the proposal that ministers who fail to win the vice-president's post in the coming Umno election should resign from the Cabinet.

Abdullah said those aspiring to contest for the three vice-president posts must be able to judge their own capability and whether they can carry out their responsibilities,

"Umno does not have any regulation that ministers who fail to be elected to party posts must resign from the Cabinet. This cannot be made into a regulation.

"This is just the suggestion of a party leader (Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad) and we did not even discuss it during our meeting tonight," said Abdullah after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Backbenchers Club chairman Shahrir had proposed that members contesting for Umno vice-presidency should resign from their Cabinet posts if they lost.

Shahrir said the proposal would prevent candidates from remaining in the comfort of their Cabinet posts despite being rejected by members.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Umno Cabinet ministers who lose in the party elections should have the right to decide if they want to resign from their Government posts.

He said Government appointments was the sole prerogative of the Prime Minister and should not be linked to party posts.



MUHYIDDIN: PM's prerogative

"If someone loses, then it is up to the Prime Minister to decide whether that person stays as a member of his administration," he said at the Parliament lobby today.

Muhyiddin, who is the Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister, recalled that he conveyed his intention to resign to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad after his defeat in Umno elections, but was told "there was no need" to do that.

Muhyiddin said Shahrir was entitled to his opinion but questioned why the Johor Baru MP confined his proposal to only contestants eyeing the vice-presidency.

"Why should only vice-president candidates be asked to resign from

their Cabinet posts when there are others contesting supreme council seats?"

Muhyiddin said it was normal for members of the administration to offer themselves for high positions in the party.

"Whether they are elected or not is another matter. We have to keep an open mind and I am not saying I agree or disagree with Shahrir...I am only giving the pros and cons to the proposal," he said.

Vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the proposal had its merits but felt more problems would crop up if it was implemented.

One of its disadvantages, he said, was that it could lead to intense competition and rampant money politics as candidates would be under pressure to win or risk losing their government posts.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the proposal, which he described as "interesting", should be thoroughly studied to avoid polemics in the party.

"It is only a proposal. The party needs to scrutinise its meaning and implications," he said at a Press conference after opening a seminar "All Hazards Response".

Puteri Umno chief Datuk Azalina Othman rejected the idea flatly, arguing Cabinet appointments were the prerogative of the Prime Minister and not the party.

"What about those who are not Cabinet ministers but only division chiefs or assemblymen? Do they have to relinquish their posts as well?"