

No right to reject applications, says Umno supreme council

Admit all, branches ordered

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The Umno supreme council has warned divisions and branches against arbitrarily rejecting applications for membership and refusing to recognise those who have been accepted by the party as members.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said divisions and branches acting in this manner were exceeding their authority.

"The branches have no right to reject anyone as members. It is not the right of divisions and branches to refuse to recognise membership," he told a Press conference after chairing a three-hour supreme council meeting here.

Dr Mahathir reiterated the supreme council decision issued as a directive to divisions and branches after its last meeting that all former members and those who applied to join the party must be accepted.

"All applicants are to be accepted," he said.

On the decision by the Gertak Merah branch not to accept Johore Baru MP Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad as a member, Dr Mahathir said: "We have

directed all branches to accept all applications for membership."

However, he said, the matter of a supreme council seat for Datuk Shahrir was not discussed at the meeting.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council had decided that group A Government officers or those who were declared bankrupt must relinquish their posts in Umno.

He said several people in these two categories had either been elected chairmen, divisional heads or committee members in the recent divisional delegates' meetings. They would have to relinquish their posts.

Smooth running

Dr Mahathir expressed the fear that if the party allowed them to hold posts, certain people with bad intentions would take the matter to court or sue the party, and then make it unlawful.

Deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba said if a person was declared a bankrupt after a divisional election, he must step down and the vacancy would be filled by his deputy.

However, if the person had been declared a bankrupt before an election, a fresh one would have to be held.

Encik Ghafar said the divisions would have to hold the delegates' meeting again, especially if the chairman was a bankrupt and was not eligible to hold the post.

"A chairman is responsible for the smooth running of a meeting. If he does not qualify (as chairman), then the meeting is null and void."

He said two divisions, Pasir Salak and Bukit Gantang, both in Perak, had to hold fresh delegates' meetings while three or four more were under investigation by the State liaison committees.

Today's supreme council meeting focussed on party administrative matters, particularly the divisional delegates' meetings, Dr Mahathir said.

He said there were discrepancies in some divisions and had to hold fresh divisional meetings.

Generally, he said, the party had managed to resolve the problem faced by the divisions with the help of its legal adviser and Encik Ghafar, who was the expert on the party's constitution.

On reports that Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was willing to rejoin Umno, Dr Mahathir said: "We are open. Anybody can apply and we will accept them. But if a person joins to bring the party down, that's a problem."

He said the supreme council also discussed the unemployment problem in the country and the question of increasing investments.

"We are not satisfied that some of those unemployed are reluctant to move to where job opportunities abound. Because

Choosy Malays' create problem, says PM

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they are not willing to do certain jobs, they have caused the influx of illegal immigrants into the country.

"And because these immigrant workers send money home, it causes an outflow of foreign exchange."

Asked what action the Government would take to curb the situation, he said: "We have taken numerous actions before. But this is a recurring problem of the Malays being choosy."

"Don't blame anyone if, in future, the country is full of Thais, Filipinos and Indonesians."

On whether the appointment of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam as special envoy in connection with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and a member of the Malaysian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly was a sign that he would return to the Government, Dr Mahathir said:

"I read a report in a magazine which interpreted Datuk Musa's appointment as part of a rehabilitation process for him before he returns to the Government. This is the first time I am hearing such an interpretation from the Press."

"I do not know of any rehabilitation or what is meant by it. He is an Umno member and if he can work, we will give him the job ... what is wrong with that? He is fulfilling a task as an Umno member."

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet had not made any decision on a ministerial ranking for Datuk Musa.

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