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SIX CANDIDATES FOR UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL POSTS AND ONE FOR YOUTH EXCO DROPPED

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Six candidates have been disqualified from contesting for Umno Supreme Council posts and one for the Youth Exco for involvement in money politics, abuse of power and breach of the ban on campaigning.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today the six supreme council seat contenders disqualified were Pulau Pinang Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Mohamed Shariff Omar, Shah Alam Member of Parliament Datuk Salamon Salamat, who is also the Shah Alam Umno division head, and four state executive councillors.

Anwar, who is also the Umno Management and Discipline Committee chairman, said the state executive councillors were Datuk Mohamed Aini Taib (Selangor), Datuk Dr Abdul Malek Hanafiah (Perak), Haji Adam Abdul Hamid (Johor) and Datuk Dr Latiff Mirasa (Pulau Pinang).

"The decision was made by the supreme council's special committee at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this afternoon after considering all the information and proof received from the Management and Discipline Committee," he told a news conference at the Prime Minister's Department, here.

Anwar said the candidate for the Youth Exco who was disqualified was Ayob Mat Aris of Selangor.

He said they were still eligible as delegates to the Umno general assembly from Oct 9 to 12 except for Adam and Ayob whose cases were more serious.

Anwar said that besides Adam and Ayob the Special Committee also dropped 14 other party members from the delegates list.

Eight of the delegates dropped are from Kedah, two each from Kelantan, Selangor and Johor and one each from Negeri Sembilan and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

Without giving details on money politics or the offences committed by the candidates and delegates, Anwar said the action against them was appropriate because ample warning had been given but was ignored.

"Based on the list of those disqualified, it is clear that we do not favour anyone in discharging our duties," he said.

For example, he said, Salamon was once his political secretary, Dr Abdul Malek was the prime minister's former political secretary while Mohamed Shariff was Pulau Pinang Deputy Chief Minister.

However, he said, their cases were not as serious as those still under investigation like the complaint that a candidate for the post of Youth head had asked delegates to swear by the Quran to support him.

"We still have no strong information but playing with oaths from the Quran to me is a serious offence and I hope Umno members understand that religion cannot be used as a tool," he said.

He did not discount the possibility of getting ample proof to take action against the culprit before the Youth election on Wednesday, saying that the investigation would continue until the last minute.

Anwar said the Management and Discipline Committee had also received information that several candidates were prepared to pay over RM5,000 for each vote at the last minute before the party election.

He said that in the last minute there were also delegates threatening candidates because they felt that the candidates were desperate for votes after all channels for campaigning were closed by the supreme council

through stiff regulations.

"Because of that, we decided to take stern action because if we follow the normal processs, the assembly will proceed...they can appeal to the supreme council but the president's decision is that we be firm in our decision and not open ourselves to the misconception that the principle of the struggle can be easily sacrificed," he said.

Anwar said that so far no candidate Wanita Umno candidate or delegate had been linked to money politics, abuse of poser or breaching of the ban on campaigning.

Asked about the government positions of those disqualified, Anwar said: "That must be discussed with the prime minister. For now we only take party action."

He said all the candidates and delegates disqualified had yet to be informed of the Special Committees' decision. -- BERNAMA

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