

19/02/1998

Anwar: Use channels within Umno (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Umno members at the divisions and branches are barred from making Press statements on problems at the grassroots, Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

Anwar, who is also chairman of the party's management and disciplinary committee, reminded members to use normal party channels to air their grievances and that action would be taken against those who do not adhere to the directive.

Anwar said he had discussed the matter with Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning before the Prime Minister left for a working visit to Brunei and Sabah.

Anwar said it had been agreed that all objections and problems at the branch and divisional level must be raised through the appropriate channels. Umno branches started their elections of office bearers on Feb 12 and this will end on March 15.

Elections at the divisional level will be held from March 12 to 29.

Asked to elaborate on the ruling, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, said it referred to statements which are considered detrimental to the party.

Speaking to reporters after briefing supreme council members who were assigned to supervise elections at 21 of the 165 divisions, Anwar said former Umno Youth head, Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik was eligible to contest the post of Kota Melaka divisional head.

Rahim's eligibility has been questioned by some members in the run-up to the election.

On the admission of new members, Anwar said the divisional head, deputy head, vice-head, secretary, Wanita chief and Youth leader were authorised to sign membership application forms submitted by prospective members.

This clarification came in the wake of complaints by the outgoing Kota Melaka division head, Datuk Nasir Manap, who said that his deputy, Datuk Amid Nordin, had brought in 872 new members without his (Nasir's) knowledge.

Anwar said since the deputy head could sign the membership form, this issue did not arise.

Anwar also announced several changes to the appointment of supreme council members who were assigned to supervise certain divisional meetings.

Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir will supervise proceedings at Kinabatangan and Sandakan. Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh will attend the Bachok and Peringat meetings, Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman (Kota Baru), Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (Penampang), Datuk Dr Afifuddin Omar (Beaufort) and Datuk Ibrahim Ali (Larut).

Anwar said the Supreme Council representatives were empowered to decide on-the-spot problems, if any, at these meetings to ensure smooth proceedings.

The Supreme Council representatives have been given guidelines, and they, among others, will have to go through the membership list.

However, any further problems would then be referred to the Supreme Council.

Anwar also reminded members to comply with party rules in all proceedings pertaining to the election, adding that action would be taken against those found using money or threats.

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