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`Show-cause letter recipients will be interviewed'

Lokman Mansor

THE Umno Supreme Council has decided that party members who replied to show-cause letters for their alleged involvement in anti-party activities will be interviewed before their fate is known.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party's Management and Disciplinary Committee will meet with those who had replied to the letters and report to the Supreme Council next week.

After the last committee meeting on November 4, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik had said out of 33 party members given such letters, 25 have replied, including former Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. The committee had also decided to issue show-cause letters to 12 more members.

"We will continue to monitor their activities," Dr Mahathir said, adding that the reason for the interviews is not because the Supreme Council, the party's highest decision-making body, is not satisfied with the replies given.

"There are those who pledged that they are still loyal to the party. All this has to be taken into account," he said at a press conference after the Supreme Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur last night.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting discussed the country's economic problems and the 1999 Budget. Some of the Supreme Council members gave their opinions, which he declined to disclose.

He said they also discussed slander (fitnah) by some quarters about Umno and several leaders in the party. "We will counter these."

Asked how this will be done, Dr Mahathir said Umno will have to seek cooperation from the press. "The international press, of course, will always be anti-Umno. At least the local press should be more balanced. That is all I ask."

He said the council also appointed Umno vice president Datuk Sri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Penang Umno liasion chairman, a post left vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the party on September 3.

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