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## Stay neutral or face action, Anwar warns party leaders

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today warned party leaders and State liaison committee members not to campaign on behalf of candidates contesting for posts in the party's branch and divisional elections.

Candidates should also not be pressured, threatened or stopped from contesting, said Anwar, who is also Deputy Prime Minister.

Reiterating that action would be taken against those who violated party's rules regardless of their positions, he said the warning was to avoid unhealthy contests which could split the party.

Speaking after chairing a disciplinary committee meeting, he said: "We do not want the advice by party president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and the supreme council that contest should be avoided be misconstrued."

This, he said, was because it could lead to some candidates getting support from some quarters while others were prevented from contesting.

"What is being called for is for compromise to be reached through consultation," he said.

Anwar also warned aspiring candidates against using the names of the party president and deputy president to garner support.

"This is considered an offence and action will be taken against those who failed to comply."

Asked whether the disciplinary committee had received complaints over the matter, he said although the practice was not widespread, there were members believed to have indulged in such activities.

On whether the warning to leaders and State liaison committees to refrain from showing support to candidates indicated that some of them had taken sides in the elections, Anwar said it was made to ensure that the spirit of Dr Mahathir's advice was respected and adhered to.

"We do not want unhealthy contest and to avoid one if possible. But at the same time we do not want divisions or State liaison committees to express support outside the purview or parameter of the party's constitution," he said.

He added the essence of Dr Mahathir's advice was for members to work as a team, something which would not be achieved if some candidates were given the support while others were denied the chance to be elected.

"Sometimes, the contests are not serious ...(especially) when candidates received only one or two nominations, which could cause disunity. We want the spirit of democracy be understood and not misused to cause disharmony and disturbances."

Anwar also announced the council's decision to supervise the elections at 16 divisions. A council member had been appointed to oversee these meetings.

They are Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil for the Tanjung division in Penang; Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (Tapah, Perak); Datuk Dr Ibrahim Saad (Ipoh Timor, Perak); Datuk Mohamed Rahmat (Batu, Federal Territory); Datuk Ibrahim Ali (Kapar, Selangor); Datuk Salleh Said (Jempol, Negri Sembilan) and Datuk Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali (Kota Melaka, Malacca).

Others are Datuk Nazri Aziz (Rantau Panjang, Kelantan); Datuk Shafie Apdal (Kubang Kerian, Kelantan); Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh (Peringat, Kelantan); Datuk Suleiman Mohamed (Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan); Datuk Dr Affifuddin Omar (Sipitang, Sabah); Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob (Silam, Sabah); Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir (Beaufort, Sabah);

Datuk Hasan Arifin (Gaya, Sabah) and Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman (Kinabatangan, Sabah).

Anwar said if there were any problems, members could refer the matter to them.

Asked whether their appointments indicated that the 16 divisions had been identified as "problematic", he said the council felt greater attention should be given to them.

Anwar also warned the Jempol division that action, including against its leaders, would be taken if it failed to stop two suspended members from being actively involved in party activities.

On the Permatang Pasir Tengah and Permatang Pasir branch meetings in the Kota Melaka division which had to be postponed following disturbances, Anwar said it had been decided that the meetings would be supervised by representatives of the council, State liaison committee and the division.

He said members who had paid their subscriptions were entitled to attend meetings and warned that if this was not adhered to, such meetings risked the danger of being nullified with action taken against their leaders.

The committee also decided that the head of the Kubang Kerian division Mat Zin Awang be barred from contesting any post.

It was learnt the action to bar him was taken following complaints that Mat Zin had defied the council's directive to admit a number of defunct Parti Melayu Semangat 46 members into the division.

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