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PM: S46 members must be accepted as candidates

UMNO members must not make it an issue if any former Parti Semangat 46 (S46) member who has joined Umno is nominated to stand as candidates in the coming general election, its president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

"As far as we are concerned they are Umno members. They are not ex-S46 members, they are just Umno members. We don't discriminate or differentiate," he said.

Speaking at a press conference after the Umno supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur last night, Dr Mahathir said members must be ready to accept whoever is nominated, whether they are Umno members or those of other Barisan Nasional component parties.

The Umno Constitution was amended last December to include, among other things, a requirement that a person must be an member for at least five years before he can stand as candidate in an election.

Dr Mahathir said former S46 members who were readmitted into Umno are exempted from this requirement because the amendments were made after they joined the party.

"Therefore, former S46 members are eligible to be nominated for election. Furthermore, we feel those who joined Umno are full Umno members. There is no discrimination against them," he added.

Dr Mahathir said this to clarify some confusion among Umno members about how former S46 members who rejoined Umno would be treated in respect of the five-year condition.

"I spoke yesterday (at the closed-door pre-council meeting on Wednesday) that those who can be nominated are Umno members of more than five years. This raised the question about what happens to S46 members who were Umno members before.

"Do we consider their membership from the date they rejoined Umno? In this case we exempt them from the requirement because they joined after the decision was made," he said.

Dr Mahathir also announced that Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Adnan Yaakob took his oath last night as a supreme council member.

On the 53rd Umno General Assembly which begins today, Dr Mahathir said the supreme council is satisfied with the preparations so far. The three-day event will see Umno delegates debating on the presidential address, religion and the economy.

"We are also satisfied with the running of the Umno Youth and Wanita meetings," he added.

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