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Umno-Expulsion

UMNO SACKS 73 FOR SUPPORTING OPPOSITION

KUALA LUMPUR, June 7 (Bernama) -- The Umno Supreme Council which met tonight expelled 73 of its members for supporting opposition parties, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

They were found to have supported the opposition during the Sabah state election last March and Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) led by Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, wife of jailed former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Of the number, 41 were permanently expelled, said Abdullah, who is Umno vice-president and chairman of the party's Management and Disciplinary Committee.

Abdullah is also performing the duties of party deputy president.

"Forty-one of them are permanently sacked for standing as opposition candidates and supporting opposition candidates in the state election," Abdullah told a press conference after the meeting chaired by Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, here.

Dr Mahathir, when asked by reporters, said those affected by the permanent expulsion were mostly involved with the opposition during the Sabah state election.

Even prior to this, Dr Mahathir said, Umno had also expelled several members for supporting Keadilan.

Neither Dr Mahathir nor Abdullah identified those sacked.

Dr Mahathir said tonight's meeting, which lasted more than three hours, concentrated on Umno's strategies to counter allegations by opposition parties and the Umno general assembly set for next week.

Dr Mahathir said the party strategies include providing Umno speakers with the necessary input in order for them to explain to the people what the government has been doing.

"For example, concerning what are labelled as +mega projects+, claims that Umno rejects Islam and also Umno's stand on PAS' interpretation of Islamic (Hudud) laws, that we have definite stand on the PAS version of the Hudud and several other matters," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Umno Supreme Council also decided to proceed with legal action against those defaming the party and its leaders in line with the earlier decisions of the party's Legal Action Committee chaired by Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

Dr Mahathir said the party will hold a special assembly on the eve of the Umno Youth and Wanita Umno delegates' conferences on June 17 to listen to the views of Umno's own eminent Islamic scholars.

He said Pahang new Menteri Besar Datuk Adnan Yaakob, although not a supreme council member, was invited to attend tonight's meeting and to sit together with the council members on the dais during the upcoming party general assembly.

The assembly is scheduled for June 18 to 20.

Another Umno vice president and Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has been tasked with being chairman of the assembly's committee on motions.

Najib said the assembly would debate on three motions, namely the motion of thanks for the presidential speech, a motion on religion and another on economy.

"Social issues can also be raised in the motion on religion as well as distortions by opposition parties," Najib said.

Abdullah said the meeting also approved the opening of 14 new Umno branches in Selangor, Kedah, Sabah and Negeri Sembilan.

-- BERNAMA

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