

Umno Supreme Council approves code of ethics

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By LOKMAN MANSOR

THE Umno Supreme Council yesterday approved a code of ethics for party elections in May. The code governs the conduct of both aspiring candidates and party members during the campaigning and election process.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the code of ethics was drawn up to prevent abuse of power and money politics by candidates contesting for seats on the party's Supreme Council.

"We have full confidence that Umno members will not do anything to tarnish the party's image. Of course we cannot spell out every detail in the code of ethics. They will have to use their own judgement," he said.

Speaking at a press conference after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, the Prime Minister said party members should realise the importance of self-discipline.

Elaborating on the code of ethics, Umno management and disciplinary committee chairman Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said it prohibits candidates from giving donations or using money with the intention of winning votes.

"Umno divisions themselves cannot organise anything on behalf of candidates, for example arranging meetings with delegates to the general assembly. The divisions cannot ask for funds to finance their programmes," he said.

Abdullah said the code also prohibits the candidates from sponsoring delegates to the general assembly, for example by paying for their fares, accommodation, or giving them allowances.

He said under the code,

candidates also cannot abuse their powers or current positions to win votes. This includes incentives or threats, or for instance, a candidate hosting a dinner for delegates paid for by government funds.

"Or for example, if a candidate is head of a state economic development corporation (SEDC), he cannot use SEDC buses to transport delegates from their divisions to the general assembly with the intention of winning votes," Abdullah said.

He said if there is proof of such activities, the candidate can lose his right to contest. The code will be distributed to all Umno divisions and any party

member can submit a report if they have sufficient evidence.

Asked if the code of ethics shows that the Umno Supreme Council is restricting the freedom of party members, Dr Mahathir said: "We are not restricting their freedom. If they want to do something against the code, they must be willing to accept any action against them.

"Anywhere you go, there are codes of ethics. A person who lives without a culture or noble values becomes a useless human being. (Are they saying) If we cannot give money (to win votes) then we are not free?"

Dr Mahathir said Umno

is free and democratic, stressing that the no-contest for the top two posts of president and deputy president is only an advice and not a directive.

"If they do not want to listen to our advice, they can do whatever they want. We advised it for the good of the party. If they are too eager to be leaders and Umno falls apart, they will become empty leaders," he added.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the Umno Supreme Council meeting also discussed how to ensure the right information is disseminated to Umno leaders and members. As an example, Dr Mahathir said Umno members faced difficulties

to answer recent rumours about his health (while on vacation overseas) because they did not get the right information.

"But I reminded them that rumours about my death and my health have been spread many times and were all proven false, so they can comfortably say that there is no basis for such rumours, and those who spread the rumours can wait for me to return home to see for themselves," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the same difficulty is faced by Umno leaders and members when answering allegations about abuse of power and money politics in Umno.

"We will conduct special sessions to give clear explanations about all this, so that they can better reply to such allegations," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdullah also disclosed that 35 Umno members have been expelled from the party while another 386 will receive show-cause letters for supporting the opposition during the last general elections.