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Candidates get nod to campaign

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Candidates vying for Umno supreme council positions can campaign but not excessively, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Umno president said they had agreed not to go overboard in their campaigning and also pledged not to indulge in money politics.

He said the assurance was given by 59 of the 63 aspirants for the supreme council positions during a meeting at his official residence in Putrajaya last night.

Dr Mahathir said if the aspirants went overboard in their campaigning, this might be misconstrued as indulging in money politics.

"However, they said that they would not engage in money politics but instead campaign legitimately. I told them not to do anything which is bad," he told reporters after opening a symposium on "Malay Identity in the 21st Century" at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The symposium was in conjunction with the setting up of the Za'aba Chair at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.

Asked about the purpose of the meeting, Dr Mahathir said it was to explain to members the situation in the party.

"I told them to explain to members the situation in Umno and not to do anything that will tarnish the popularity of the party."

At stake are 25 positions in the supreme council. Dr Mahathir said the pledge not to indulge in money politics and unethical campaigning was made by the aspirants and not upon his instruction.

"It was not my instruction... it was their decision. I merely explained the situation in Umno," he said, adding that it was similar to that made by 15 candidates contesting for posts of Umno vice-president, Wanita and Youth heads and deputy heads.

The pledge by those vying for the top posts, made before Dr Mahathir on Monday, was to stem money politics in Umno and to promote a healthy election next month.

However, anyone found breaching the pledge would have his or her misconduct exposed during the general assembly starting May 11.

The 15 also signed a four-point pledge before the party president.

They, among other things, pledged to discontinue any form of campaigning, refrain from practising money or corrupt politics, stop any form of campaigning by supporters, representatives and agents, whether directly or indirectly, and refrain from contacting delegates or allowing delegates to contact them in any way whatsoever.

Yesterday, Perlis Umno chief and Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim had said after the meeting that those present had unanimously agreed to stop all form of campaigning in an effort to eradicate money politics.

However, Umno youth exco member and Bank Simpanan Nasional chairman Datuk Abdul Azim Ahmad Zabidi, who is also vying for a seat in the council, had said at least six other aspirants had requested for some form of campaigning to introduce themselves.

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