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Council aspirants may make pledge

Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Sharanjit Singh

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - All aspirants for the 25 Umno supreme council seats are likely to make a written pledge to refrain from engaging in money politics and unhealthy campaigning after a meeting with the party president tomorrow night.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he will meet the 74 aspirants but it was still up to them to decide whether to emulate what the 15 candidates bidding for senior party posts did last Monday.

"Yes, if they (candidates) agree, the decision will be theirs (and it's) not my directive.

"I will explain (to them) the problems of misusing money and why it is not good," said the Prime Minister to reporters at the Sultan Abdul Halim airport in Kepala Batas here before leaving for Kuala Lumpur at the end of his day-long working visit to Kedah.

Dr Mahathir was asked about the scheduled meeting with the aspirants and whether they would also be required to sign a similar pledge like the one signed by the 15 candidates.

On Monday, the 15 who are vying for the posts of vice-president, Wanita chief, deputy Wanita chief and deputy Youth chief signed a four-point pledge to stem money politics and promote a healthy election campaign for the forthcoming party elections.

Anyone found breaching their pledge would have their misconduct exposed during the general assembly beginning May 11.

Asked whether the signing of the pledge by the 15 candidates had shown a positive development, Dr Mahathir said:

"As far as we know it (the problem) had been reduced. There are only certain people in Kuala Lumpur (who are still active)."

On follow-up measures to curb the negative activity, Dr Mahathir said the party would continue to monitor the situation.

He also admitted the possibility of certain people pretending to be agents of certain candidates and might report to the party on those alleged to be involved in bribery.

"This could happen but we have to study such cases. If the information provided is correct, then we cannot reject them," he added.

Asked on the move by certain States to have their own guidelines to prevent delegates from being exposed to money politics, Dr Mahathir said he would stress in his speech on the importance of delegates not to vote for candidates who make use of money to influence their choice.

Dr Mahathir, who was earlier scheduled to open the Kedah Umno convention today, also explained that the move to postpone all State-level Umno conventions until after the general assembly was to prevent the forum from being used to campaign for votes.

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