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Preparations to be made for Sanggang by-election

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the supreme council has directed that preparations be made for the Sanggang by-election.

"The secretary-general will head the federal committee while the Pahang Menteri Besar will oversee the campaign machinery," he said after chairing the party's supreme council meeting.

He said component parties would also have to render assistance to Pahang Umno during the by-election. Mentakab Umno will open 36 operations rooms during the run-up to the by-election, for which a date has yet to be fixed.

The by-election follows the death of State Assemblyman Datuk Abdullah Kia on Feb 26.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about the circular issued by the Malacca State Government to all its departments and agencies to terminate the contracts of panel doctors and lawyers who were aligned to the Opposition.

"That is the right of the Government and that is not the right of the panel members. They are appointed, so, for whatever reason, if the Government wants to terminate them, it can do so."

The party president added that there were State Governments in the East Coast which terminated the services of many officers "but not many people commented on those who were terminated, including penghulu."

The supreme council today also expelled 126 members for "acting against party interests" during the recent general election.

Chairman of the party's management and disciplinary committee Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the decision was made by the council on the committee's recommendation.

Those expelled included 21 from the Kuala Selangor division, 20 each from Kota Tinggi and Titiwangsa, 16 from Tambun, 14 from Dungun, 10 from Jasin, six from Kuala Terengganu, five from Kuala Langat, four each from Tampin and Bentong, two each from Tanjung Karang and Mersing and one each from Segamat, Paya Besar and Petaling Jaya Selatan.

Asked whether all divisions were affected, Abdullah, who is vice-president, said they were from divisions where complaints had been lodged. He said this after the party's supreme council meeting at Umno headquarters.

On reports that Astro was airing foreign programmes that had "negative influences" on the people, the Prime Minister said a study had yet to be made on the matter.

"However, we are monitoring the views of the people through the media."

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