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## Umno expands watchdog panel

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Umno technical committee has been expanded to monitor and deal with complaints on money politics and unhealthy tactics in the run-up to the party's general assembly next month.

This was decided by the party's management and disciplinary committee chaired by vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at its meeting today.

However, Abdullah, who is carrying out the duties of deputy president, said the names of the new members would be announced later after they had given their agreement.

The committee headed by Datuk Zaki Tun Azmi, and which presently has six members, is responsible for investigating and ascertaining the veracity of all complaints before forwarding recommendations to the Umno supreme council.

Abdullah said it was important that the technical committee be strengthened to ensure it would be able to give immediate attention to any claims on money politics and unhealthy campaigning.

He said this was necessary following the no-campaign pledge by 15 candidates bidding for senior posts in the elections.

The 15 are vying for the posts of vice-president, Wanita chief, deputy Wanita chief and deputy Youth chief.

Anyone found breaching the pledge, signed before Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday, would have his or her misconduct exposed during the general assembly starting on May 11.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir was also scheduled to meet candidates vying for supreme council seats where a similar pledge was expected.

On whether the no-campaign rule would be included in the party constitution or imposed for future party elections, Abdullah said it depended on the situation.

"We make rules according to the needs," he said, calling on members to adhere to the agreement reached by the 15 candidates.

On the suspension of the Bandar Tun Razak division, Abdullah said it had submitted an appeal which would be studied by the technical committee.

He said the division head would be called before the committee to explain.

Abdullah was also asked about his meeting with the six former Parti Bersatu Sabah Assemblymen who crossed over to Barisan Nasional on Monday.

"They explained the reasons why they made the decision. They felt their desire to serve the people would be achieved better through the BN.

"They also wanted political parties in Sabah to join the BN because the people and the State must be brought into mainstream politics. They disagreed with the brand of politics of Sabah for Sabahans."

Abdullah said the Assemblymen had pledged to co-operate with BN leaders in the State.

The six are Datuk Dr Jeffrey Kitingan (Bingkor), Karim Adam (Kundasang), Edward Linggu Bukut (Tamparuli), Johnny Goh (Inanam), Louis Rampas (Kiulu) and Atong Magabis (Matunggong).

(END)