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Umno sacks 5, issues show cause letters to another 64

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THE Umno Supreme Council last night sacked five members and issued show cause letters to another 64 for disloyalty towards the movement during the 10th general elections.

The party's deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said two of them had contested for the Opposition during the polls, and they have been banned from Umno for life.

Speaking to reporters in Kuala Lumpur after chairing a three-hour meeting of the Supreme Council, he noted that no prominent member was involved.

The two slapped with a life-ban are Usaili Alias who stood on a Keadilan ticket for the state seat of Bota in Perak and Mohd Azmi Lop Yusoff who contested as a Pas candidate for the Bandar state seat in Terengganu.

The other three sacked are Azmi Salleh and Mohamad Embong who deserted the party to join Pas, and Datuk Syed Omar @ Abu Bakar Abdullah, for campaigning for Pas. All three are from Terengganu.

The 64 members issued with show cause letters are from the Sepang Umno division.

Abdullah presided over the meeting in place of Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is abroad for a holiday and a working trip.

On Umno veteran Tun Ghafar Baba's suggestion that the two top posts in Umno be contested in the coming party elections, Abdullah said: "It is an issue which has already been discussed."

It is the opinion of one member and every Umno member is entitled to his view, he said, adding that: "Off and on, the issue can be expected to be brought up by members".

The meeting also saw the Umno Youth and Wanita leaders expressing support for the Supreme Council's stand that there be no contest for the posts of president and deputy president this May.

"The Umno Youth and Wanita Umno chiefs informed the council that the two movements have decided to accept the Supreme Council's advice," Abdullah said.

On January 3, the Supreme Council had proposed that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Abdullah be nominated unopposed to the top two Umno posts.

Dr Mahathir has been party president since 1981, while Abdullah has been performing the duties of the deputy president for the past one year. The deputy president's post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998.

The Supreme Council also directed all Umno divisions to step up their respective programmes in respect of activities at the mosques nationwide.

"The central religious bureau will provide the direction related to mosque and surau activities for implementation by the divisional bureaus," he added.

The divisional level bureaus on education, labour, information and other matters were meanwhile also instructed by the Supreme Council to intensify their activities.

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