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DPM: No need for re-election

Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - There will be no fresh elections in divisions where the chiefs elected by the delegates are found guilty of practising money politics, Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

Abdullah said there was no need for a re-election if the number of members involved in money politics in a particular division was small.

He said this was decided by the Umno management and disciplinary committee which held a two-hour meeting at the party headquarters.

Abdullah, who is committee chairman said in such cases where the division chief is suspended, his deputy will be appointed as the acting head, until the next division election.

"The division meeting will not be affected," he added.

But, Abdullah said a re-election will only be ordered in cases such as where representatives of a branch are found to be involved in money politics in which their votes had influenced the outcome.

He said in such cases, there would be a very close fight in which the majority between the candidates is very slim.

On the supreme council's decision on Monday to report members found guilty of practising money politics to the Anti-Corruption Agency, Abdullah said it reflected the party's seriousness in fighting money politics.

"All this while, we did not want to involve Government agencies in party matters. But now, we have to do so to restore the members' confidence in Umno. Party leaders have given numerous advice to members not to be involved in money politics, but it is still happening and we have to put a stop to it."

Abdullah said although the party's image could be tarnished if some members were found guilty by the ACA, at least it would show the party's seriousness.

"It shows we are willing to take action against anyone without considering whether they are ordinary members or holding important positions in the party.

"What is important is to resuscitate the party's image from this group of people who are not bothered about the party and carry out activities which could be termed as betraying and embarrassing the party."

Abdullah also said a gathering involving around 2,000 veteran party members will be held in Putra World Trade Centre on May 11, in conjunction with the party's 55th anniversary.

During the event, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to address the veteran members and have a dialogue session with them.

Abdullah was also asked on the statement by Jelutong Umno chief Datuk Abdul Rashid Ismail that he will meet Abdullah regarding the indefinite postponement of the division meeting which was scheduled for this Sunday.

"Anyone is free to meet me and we can discuss the issue," said Abdullah.

Abdul Rashid said the postponement was to iron out a few matters pertaining to complaints from eight Umno branches under the division.