

22 JAN 2001

Abdullah-Fees

UMNO BRANCH AND DIVISION CHIEFS WARNED OVER FEE REJECTION

MELAKA, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Umno party and division chiefs who refuse to accept fees from members were today warned that action will be taken against them by the respective State Umno Liaison Committees.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is the Umno deputy president, said the matter was serious as such actions clearly violated the party's constitution.

"This problem was there before, and there are still branches and divisions carrying on with it.

"They give all sorts of excuses (for rejecting fees) including questioning the validity of the membership," he told reporters after an Umno Supreme Council meeting here.

Abdullah chaired the meeting, the council's second outside Kuala Lumpur, after party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad left midway as he was feeling unwell.

Abdullah said the meeting discussed the problem and decided that affected members should hand over their fees to the State Umno Liaison Committee or Umno headquarters.

"I suggested to the State Liaison Committee chairmen that when this happens, call the branch chiefs concerned and warn them," he said.

Abdullah said that previously, such affected members could pay directly to the party headquarters but now the state committees too were given the authority to accept fees.

He said refusing to accept fees was clearly wrong as all members had the right to pay fees and attend meetings.

"Nobody can be prevented from paying their fees," he said.

Asked how serious the problem was, Abdullah said: "Although it involves only three branches, it is serious enough. It doesn't need to involve tens of branches to become serious."

He said one reason why branch and division leaders rejected fees from members was that they did not want them to attend meetings and oppose them.

Abdullah said today's meeting also decided that this year's branch and divisional meetings would be conducted in accordance with the party's new constitution as soon as it was approved by the Registrar of Societies.

On the proposed meeting between Umno and PAS to discuss Malay unity, the Deputy Prime Minister said the date had yet to be fixed.

However, he said, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob had been in contact with his PAS counterpart, Nasharuddin Mat Isa, several times over the matter.

"Both sides will fix the date, place and list of those who will accompany the presidents of the two parties at the meeting," he said.

Abdullah said Dr Mahathir briefed the Supreme Council members about last week's appointment of two new ministers, two deputy ministers and a parliamentary secretary.

The council members were also explained about former minister Datuk Paduka Dr Abdul Hamid Othman's appointment as Religious Adviser to the Prime Minister.

"The Supreme Council recorded its appreciation to Hamid for his contributions as a minister," he said.

Abdullah said today's meeting also discussed the controversy over the decision to close Universiti Malaya's Science Matriculation Centre, and

left it to Dr Mahathir to discuss the matter with Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad.

-- BERNAMA

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