

Umno deputy president aspirant to be suspended?

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All eyes are on the Umno disciplinary committee meeting tomorrow following widespread rumours that a senior party leader, who is slated to contest in the upcoming Umno polls, could be suspended for money politics.

This afternoon, a Chinese daily added more fuel to the already raging speculation, when it sent out a 'SMS news alert' claiming that a deputy president aspirant's party membership might be suspended.

Without mentioning names, the alert claimed that the suspension could stretch for three years, meaning that the leader will not be able to run in the party polls, which will kick off on March 24.

The three heavyweights vying for the number two slot are International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam and Rural Development Minister Muhammad Muhd Taib.

The same rumour has also been making the rounds among media representatives who are covering the on-going parliamentary proceedings.

In Umno circles, the name of the particular leader, who is known among the delegates as 'Mr Likeable', has also been openly mentioned.

The veteran politician is said to have the potential and support to pull off an upset against the hot favourite, Muhyiddin.

Aides claim to be in the dark

Umno disciplinary committee chairperson Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen Tengku Ismail will hold a special press conference after chairing the meeting tomorrow evening.

He is expected to announce the committee's findings regarding its investigation concerning the particular leader.

However, aides of the three candidates, when contacted, claimed to be in the dark regarding the rumour.

"We are carrying on with our campaign as usual," said the aide of one contestant.

According to him, their camp will intensify its campaign over the next days in Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak and Selangor.

"Tonight, there is a function to introduce all the candidates for the Umno positions at a hotel in Shah Alam," he said.

Khair claims saboteurs at work

Meanwhile, Muhd Taib urged the party disciplinary committee to clear up the issue as soon as possible to avoid any misunderstanding in the run up to the party polls.

"Name the guilty person, if there is one - soon," he told reporters in Parliament.

Meanwhile, bloggers have been busily speculating on the identity of the person believed to be suspended tomorrow.

Some other names too have been bandied about as potential candidates to be served with suspension letters, including those contesting for Umno Youth posts.

Mohd Khir Toyo, who is contesting for the Umno Youth chief post, was reported last week as saying that there were attempts to sabotage him as well as Ali Rustam from contesting in the polls.

LATEST AS AT 11pm:

Later in the day, all three deputy president candidates who attended an event in Shah Alam refused to comment on the speculation that one of them could be suspended.

"You have to ask about that to the disciplinary committee," said Ali Rustam, who also refused to deny or confirm if he had been summoned by the disciplinary committee.

He also said that he was not worried over the speculations that one of the candidates would be suspended.

"Why must I be worried?" he asked, adding that there was nothing to be read in his meeting with Umno division leaders in Malacca tomorrow.

"That meeting is only to prepare for the Umno general assembly," added the Malacca chief minister.

As for Muhd Taib, he responded briefly by stating that it was best to just wait for the official announcement from the disciplinary committee.

The third candidate, Muhyiddin refused to comment at all.