

Barred Umno leader to cease campaigning

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Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam said he will stop all campaign activities for the Umno deputy presidency with immediate effect.

Speaking to reporters after attending the Umno management committee meeting in Parliament today, the veteran politician said this is because he has lost his eligibility to contest the post.

“Campaign? There’s no more campaign,” he said when asked if he would pursue his campaign.

He said that he would not meet delegates in Seremban tomorrow as “I have been disqualified”.

Yesterday, the Umno disciplinary committee barred Mohd Ali from standing in the party polls which will kick off on March 24, due to alleged involvement in money politics through his agents.

Prior to the decision, the battle for No. 2 had involved three contenders, including favourite International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and Rural Development Minister Muhammad Muhd Taib.

On the management meeting, which was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, Mohd Ali said it was a routine meeting but declined to comment on whether his issue was raised.

Asked if he had discussed the matter with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, he replied: “I haven’t met him yet. I will meet him at an appropriate time.”

Mohd Ali, who was composed, said he had sent an appeal letter today through his secretary to pursue the next course of action against the disciplinary committee's decision.

However, he said he does not know if the appeal can be heard before the Umno general assembly begins.

Hishammuddin 'impressed'

Outgoing Umno Youth Chief Hishammuddin Hussein said the question of Mohd Ali resigning as chief minister does not arise because the decision to suspend him was made under party procedures.

“Pressure by other people is not something that should be even considered because the decision was made by the Umno disciplinary board,” he said, when asked to comment on the possibility.

Hishammuddin, who had also attended the management meeting, revealed that the Mohd Ali was “calm and strong” throughout the session with other Umno leaders.

“I am impressed with him because he said the party is more important than the individual. Such things have happened in the past, and this proves that leaders are honest about the party”.

He added that no one in Umno should mind being investigated for money politics by either the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commissions or the disciplinary board “so long that it is not selective prosecution” and the action taken is “fair and just”.

Hishammuddin said that all party election candidates, including he himself, should be investigated.

He added that if there was strong evidence of any alleged wrongdoing, then the action taken by the party's disciplinary board and MACC should be fair as their (the candidates') credibility was at stake.

"I think all, including myself, should be investigated. But the condition is that it should be fair and there should not arise any suspicion that only certain candidates are investigated," he said.

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