

PM: Umno's doors closed to Anwar



QUESTION TIME: Abdullah (centre), flanked by Najib (left) and Umno secretary-general Datuk Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, answering queries from the press after he chaired Umno's supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur last night.

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno's door is closed to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for now.

The party's supreme council made this unanimous decision at its meeting yesterday.

Umno incoming president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said all council members concurred with him after he gave them his views that Anwar should not be re-admitted into the party.

"I explained my earlier statement about there being no deal with Anwar regarding his re-entry into Umno. I told them there was no plan to bring him back and they agreed with me. That means the door is closed to him, for now.

"At the same time, the members also pledged their support for me and Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak," he said after chairing the meeting.

Asked whether Anwar should be taken back like in the cases of Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib who were suspended but allowed to re-

assume their posts after they were cleared of their charges, Abdullah said:

"Any decision made by the council is never intended to be a precedent. Furthermore, no two cases are the same. They (Rahim and Muhammad) were charged while still within Umno, they were advised to vacate their posts while they cleared their names in the court. Anwar's case is different."

Anwar was sacked from the party in 1998 and following that, he headed a reform movement which joined forces with the opposition and went against Umno and Barisan Nasional.

Asked if there were moves by any party member to bring Anwar back into Umno, Abdullah said he was not aware of such a thing.

On whether delegates would be allowed to raise the issue at the gener-

al assembly next week, he said they were normally allowed to voice their views on any issue they saw fit.

Asked whether he was concerned of Anwar's influence if he remained outside the party, Abdullah said:

"We are not worried. Our party is very strong. It is the biggest party in Malaysia and we are the government."

Asked to clarify the party's latest decision allowing candidates vying for party top posts to campaign, including hosting dinners for delegates, Abdullah said the flexibility was only for gatherings arranged by state liaison committees, and nothing more.

He also said those who had been found guilty by the party disciplinary board for holding gatherings for delegates could refer their cases to the appeals committee.

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