

# PM clears the air with info officers

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir today met about 1,000 Information Ministry officers to clarify "certain matters" regarding Umno and the action taken by the party's Supreme Council members.

Dr Mahathir later told a Press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre, where the meeting was held, that there was a need for the clarifications in order to give a "true picture" of the political situation so that people were not confused.

He said the information officers, when asked, would then be able to "clarify as clearly as they possibly could" certain matters relating to Umno. The officers are from Federal, State and district levels.

Dr Mahathir said these matters included talks of reviving the old Umno and of would-be members of Umno losing about \$7,000 in shares of Umno assets.

"Such talks have confused the people, including former Umno members," he said.

At the 45-minute meeting, which began at 5pm, Dr Mahathir also touched on the oral and written judgments by Mr Justice Datuk Harun Hashim on Feb 4 and April 13 respectively.

(Mr Justice Datuk Harun had on Feb 4 declared Umno unlawful at

the time it held its general assembly on April 24 last year. However, in a written judgment on April 13, he said that the office bearers elected at the 37th assembly in 1984 were the lawful office bearers.)

On this, Dr Mahathir said: "This (delivering conflicting judgments) is a new phenomenon which we have not seen before. We can only hold on to the judgment made the first time."

He said action had already been taken following Mr Justice Datuk Harun's judgment made on Feb 4.

(Since the ruling, the old Umno had already been deregistered by the Registrar of Society on Feb 12 and the new Umno was set up.)

Dr Mahathir added: "It appears that the judge had second thoughts. If this is the case, then it is difficult for us to hold on to a court decision. We don't know whether a decision can be accepted or whether it will change."

To another question, he said Umno, through legal channels, was now studying the implications of the differing judgments.

Asked whether the split in Umno was the result of the intense contest during last April 24 party elections, he said: "I have said that a contest will result in a split. This is happening now with a group supporting one side and one group supporting the other. There are still attempts

to further split former Umno members."

However, Dr Mahathir did not think the situation was serious as a majority of Umno members supported the action taken by party leaders.

He however felt that if there was an election now, Umno might lose in areas where the old Umno had won by a small majority.

He cited Kelantan as an example, and said that the action by "this group" could cause the defeat of Umno in the State.

"It is as though they want Pas to win," he added.

On the statement by former Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah regarding the party status and the call for the office bearers of the 1984 assembly to be restored, Dr Mahathir said: "The law is clear. (The old) Umno is illegal. Even if the office bearers of 1984 were the lawful office bearers, he (Tengku Razaleigh) is not among them. I will still be president and many members of the new Umno will remain Supreme Council members."

On the status of former Umno MPs turned independent Members of Parliament, he said: "They have to vacate their seats as Umno MPs. They have all signed an agreement not to 'jump' to another party. It looks like the agreement does not hold."