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Mahathir-S46

PM CONFIDENT SUSPICION TOWARDS S46 MEMBERS WILL NOT LAST LONG

KOTA BAHARU, Oct 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that any suspicion among Umno members and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) members who will be joining Umno soon will not last long.

"We know that there will be dissatisfaction among some Umno members following the entry of the S46 members but we hope such feelings will eventually be less and less intense," he told a news conference at Rumah Seri Kelantan after the Malay Unity Rally jointly organised by Umno and S46 here.

The rally is regarded as a curtain-raiser to the dissolution of S46 and the return en bloc by its members led by its president, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, soon.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that it was normal for members to be suspicious "each time a new person joins Umno but gradually they will gain confidence. Just look at Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who was also regarded with suspicion at one time but he is now the deputy president of Umno."

On the entry of S46 members en bloc, Dr Mahathir said: "For the moment we will accept them but we will later have to check and study their position."

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that with the return of Kelantan S46 members to Umno, the people of Kelantan would support the Barisan Nasional "because I feel that the people of Kelantan want unity and progress."

He however said that there were parties who wish to prevent and threaten the people of Kelantan not to join the Barisan Nasional and Umno especially.

On the position of the four Kelantan S46 exco members who wish to remain in their posts although PAS was trying to oust them, Dr Mahathir said that he would leave the matter to be handled by the S46 leaders.

"That I will leave to them...if they still wish to remain in the exco, it is their own matter, I do not want to be involved," he said.

Asked on the relationship between the Barisan Nasional and the Kelantan palace, Dr Mahathir said: "We do not have problems with the palace...previously we do not have contacts because there is no reason to have contacts but at the moment, as far as I know, there is no problem."

Asked to comment on the level of Malay unity at present, Dr Mahathir admitted that it was still not complete because PAS members were still too obsessed with the party and this is factor which hinders the attainment of the desired level of unity.

"The hinderance to Malay unity is the obsession of PAS members who are so extreme it could be likened to assabiyah thinking. I believe Malay unity would be possible without the existence of PAS," he said.

"It is not possible for PAS to be an alternative party to Malay national leadership because PAS only plays a role in dividing the people," he said.

On allegations that the federal government did not give much attention to Kelantan, Dr Mahathir said the problem was that whatever assistance or allocation made by the federal government to the state government for Kelantan was politicised by PAS.

"When we provide them assistance, they tell the people that they could still receive federal government assistance even without voting for Umno."

That is why we withhold (such assistance) and in the end the people of Kelantan become victims...but this is not Umno's fault...we can still continue to provide assistance on condition that it will not be politicised," he said. -- BERNAMA

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