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Do not cause nation problems (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The Umno supreme council today accepted the explanation of Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Taib on his detention by the Australian Customs for a currency violation, but advised party members and government officers not to do anything that could cause problems to the country.

Stating this, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the council had discussed the Selangor Menteri Besar's case.

Muhammad was charged by in a Brisbane magistrate's court on Dec 23 with failure to declare that he was carrying out of Australia an equivalent of A\$1.2 million (RM2.37m) in cash en route to New Zealand.

Under Australian law, anyone leaving the country with more than A\$5,000 in cash must make a declaration under section 15 of the Financial Transactions Report Act.

Muhammad's case is scheduled for hearing on March 21.

The Prime Minister said the council also discussed the role of non-governmental organisations and the newspapers.

He said while welcoming the role played by some NGOs, the council was dissatisfied with those which concealed their motives by registering themselves as companies instead of societies and were not being managed properly. properly managed.

"We want NGOs to really champion the cause of the people and not the views of one or two individuals.

"As such, we want NGOs to be properly registered, and have specific officers and maintain records, including finances and the sources of revenue," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said proper registration and management would ensure that only NGOs which carried out activities for the benefit of the people would be allowed to operate and at the same time prevent avoid ing them from being misused.

The Prime Minister spoke of a recent attempt by some NGOs to undermine public confidence in the police force by alleging police brutality.

He said judging from the similarity in the contents and the tone of letters sent to him by foreign NGOs and those expressed by the local NGOs, he believed that the two groups had planned and co-ordinated their programmes.

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said, Malaysian NGOs did not protest against police brutality and human rights violations in other countries.

"We would like to know why," he said.

Asked what had compelled the council to discuss the role of the NGOs and the Press, Dr Mahathir said it was because there had been many questions raised about the newspapers.

Without referring to any specific case, the Prime Minister said there were times that the newspapers made inaccurate assumptions and gave credit to those who did not deserve it while ignoring those who were entitled to it.

Dr Mahathir said what the council wanted was for the newspapers to discharge the responsibility entrusted upon them as a component of a democratic nation.

"On the other hand, we agree with the efforts of the newspapers to expose deviations irregularities within and outside the Government, including the Taxi Watch being carried out by the New Straits Times," he

said.

Citing the NST campaign against errant taxi drivers, Dr Mahathir said the council felt that newspaper criticisms should be based on truth and not on incorrect information.

"We hope that newspapers, which play a very important role in our society, are aware of the power they wield and use it wisely to avoid creating problems."

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