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Mahathir-Umno

DR MAHATHIR HOPES UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL CLEAR BEWILDERMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight expressed the hope that the Umno General Assembly beginning tomorrow will help clear matters which have caused bewilderment among members.

These matters included those touching on religion, the role of muftis, corruption and the stern measures taken within the party, the Prime Minister and Umno President said.

It was important that members understood the issues at hand so that Umno would emerge as an even stronger party able to handle future problems, he said.

The Prime Minister reiterated that the government and Umno did not reject the institution of the mufti and what actually happened was several actions had been taken in the name of the mufti by officials who did not have training in the field concerned.

He was speaking during a special interview with RTM on the eve of the three-day Umno General Assembly beginning at the Putra World Trade Centre here tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said that at the meeting between him and the muftis, he was able to explain the government's policies pertaining to the teachings of Islam while muftis were able to explain the problems they faced.

On Islam, Dr Mahathir said Umno had to play a role as there had been instances when a political party had made use of the religion to the extent of causing people to be confused about the religion.

"We have to correct the situation as the pressure from others had increased to a level which if allowed to go on will become worse," he said.

He said the democracy that was needed in Malaysia was that which gave the people the right to choose their own government and if the government did not fulfil its promise and bring development, the people have the right to change the government.

The people also had the right to retain the government or the same people if they felt that the government had the capacity to fulfil its pledges.

"In the West if the government is not changed it is not democracy," he said.

Democracy could be interpreted in many ways and the western style democracy was not suitable to the situation in Malaysia for western democracy gave freedom to the individual who exercised his freedom to the extent of jeopardising the rights of the majority.

On corruption, the Prime Minister said the government and Umno wanted to prevent this but then one simply could not accuse a person of being corrupt or name a person as such as this could affect his image.

Unless and until responsible bodies like the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) carried out investigations and verified the matter one could not be accused of being corrupt, he said.

On the poison pen letter about Deputy Prime Minister and Umno Deputy President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Dr Mahathir said it was a wicked plot to topple Anwar.

Asked whether the author of the letter wanted to voice his dissatisfaction over certain matters, the Prime Minister said, "Anyone can voice his opinion freely and no action will be taken."

However the particular letter was aimed at toppling Anwar but the

authors were not many only a small group was involved and they had been in this before.

"They were out to smear others so as to advance their own interests," he said.

Asked whether there was any way of stopping such poison pen letter activities, Dr Mahathir said, "The poison pen letter was aimed at Anwar as in the eyes of the people he is my designated successor but others may be interested and hence he must be toppled first."

When it was put to him that party members could still be asking who was his successor, Dr Mahathir said, "I have explained that my deputy is Anwar and when I step down he will succeed me."

On the challenges and struggles facing Umno, the Prime Minister said Umno's challenge was to enhance the economic status of the Bumiputeras.

"If Umno sticks to one type of struggle to uplift the spirit of the Malays, it will not be successful from the economic aspect for in economics we should know management and when we face challenges, we adopt an appropriate response," he said. -- BERNAMA

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