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Mahathir-Exco

EXCO UNDER ACA PROBE NEED NOT RESIGN-- MAHATHIR

JITRA, April 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the seven executive councillors and a Sabah Minister under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) need not follow the footsteps of former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib and resign.

He said the case of the executive councillors was different from that of Muhammad as they were still being investigated.

Muhammad, who resigned as Menteri Besar on Monday, faces two charges in a Brisbane Court, Australia, in connection with an attempt to bring out of the country money equivalent to RM2.4 million in December last year.

"I don't think they should follow the footsteps of Muhammad. Muhammad quit because he was alleged to be involved in a scandal which had become public knowledge."

"Whilst the Executive Councillors are still under ACA investigation, the agency cannot decide on whether a person is guilty merely based on allegations," he told reporters who called at his Hari Raya Haji open house at Dewan Jitra here. More than 5,000 people from all walks of life turned up at his open house.

The Prime Minister said this when asked to comment on the call by Kota Melaka Member of Parliament Lim Guan Eng that all seven Executive Councillors and a Sabah Minister who were under the ACA probe in connection with abuse of power, corruption and other irregularities step down just like Muhammad.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Azmi Khalid told the Dewan Rakyat recently that seven executive councillors -- three from Melaka, one each from Johor, Pahang, Kedah, Selangor as well as a Sabah Minister were under ACA investigation.

Dr Mahathir said: "If we want to believe allegations contained in poison pen letters it is not fair indeed, for then I myself will be involved because many people are also accusing me of all kinds of things."

Asked to comment on the on going investigations into the Wanita Umno accounts by Umno Treasurer Tun Daim Zainuddin, the Prime Minister said everyone would get to say her piece and hence they need not issue statements blaming each other.

He said the views of all concerned would be taken into account and the accused persons would be given the opportunity to answer the charges.

"Anwar Ibrahim (Deputy Umno President) had directed everyone not to make any statement but if they had any evidence they should forward it to the investigating committee," he said.

"The opportunity to defend oneself is there...if we make statements and the sif the statements appear to show that we are the ones who made the wrong decision then it will be worse," he said.

He said the investigation committee would be fair in discharging its duties and would submit a report to the Supreme Council which would also arrive at a fair decision.

Asked whether the Wanita movement faced internal problems, Dr Mahathir said: "I really do not know but then who has no problem...everyone has problems."

Asked how long the committee would take to investigate, he said, "soon."

Elaborating on his call to the press to be accurate in its reporting,

the Prime Minister said it also applied to the local media.

He said at times the local media was also inaccurate in its reporting to boost newspaper sales.

"The media has its power and if it abuses it like other people then it will be difficult," he said.

He said news reports should be based on the truth and facts.

"Report what people said ... do not cut here and add there so that the news will be more juicy leading to friends becoming enemies."

-- BERNAMA

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