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Expensive gifts, souvenirs not for BN politicians

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Organisers of functions must understand the implications of giving away expensive souvenirs to Barisan Nasional politicians and high-ranking civil servants at ceremonies.

BN secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said organisers, if they wanted to give away souvenirs, should ensure that they were not in a form which could be misinterpreted.

"Token gifts need not necessarily be expensive. They need not be in the form of cash or gold.

"Books and photos are the sort of souvenirs which will not bring about problems," he said after the BN meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

Mohamed, who is also Information Minister, was commenting on Dr Mahathir's statement at a Press conference after the meeting.

The Prime Minister said expensive souvenirs received by BN politicians and high-ranking civil servants at ceremonies should be sent to the Finance Ministry to be valued.

If it was an expensive gift, the recipient would be given a choice of whether to buy it from the Government or to allow the Ministry to keep it.

Mohamed said if organisers of functions understood the implications of giving expensive souvenirs, the task of enforcing the new ruling would not be a problem.

"Giving away souvenirs is part of Malaysian culture. The practice should not, however, be misused."

On Dr Mahathir's statement that the BN would remain as a coalition, Mohamed said the formation of a party for all races and religions would be ideal "but it is not the right time yet."

"There are still communal problems which need to be sorted out."

However, Mohamed said that efforts towards the formation of such a party were being made.

"Umno used to be only for the Malays but now it is open to all Bumiputeras. We will go about it slowly."

He said the formation of a party which will take in members of all races and religions would take some time.

"If it cannot be established in this century, maybe it can be in the next."

On the convention for BN youths, Mohamed said it would help make them understand the struggles of the party.

"The majority of Malaysians were born after the country achieved Independence. They will not, therefore, be familiar with the philosophy and formula of politics," he said.

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