

06 SEP 1997

Umno-Zahid

UMNO YOUTH CALLS FOR BAN ON HAKAKAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Umno Youth today urged the government to ban the tabloid Harakah, the official organ of the opposition Pas, for attempting to create a rift between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the muftis and ulamas.

If possible, the ban should be made tomorrow, its leader, Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said when met by reporters at the Umno general assembly, here.

He hoped that Dr Mahathir would announce the ban in his adjournment speech tomorrow.

"The time has come to take action...there is no need to wait a week or two. We want the Prime Minister to announce it in his adjournment speech tomorrow," he said.

Several delegates had also made similar call during the debate on the motion of thanks to Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, for his opening address at the 51st general assembly which entered its second day today.

"Umno Youth is serious in the matter and we urge the government to stop the distribution of Harakah which has never been granted permit by the Home Ministry," he said.

When told that Umno members were also reading the Harakah, Zahid said, "When it is in circulation, people buy because they want to know what Pas is saying."

He said the movement was not concerned so much about Umno members but the fence-sitters who might accept what was written by Pas as the truth.

"If Pas still insists on making it available to the public, then they should do it legally by applying for permit. It is up to the Home Ministry whether to approve their application or not," he said.

But Selangor assemblyman for Ulu Klang Datuk Fuad Hassan did not agree with the idea of banning Harakah.

He said this was to avoid the government from falling into the trap set by Pas.

"Pas is looking forward to such opportunity so that it can tell the world how undemocratic Malaysia is," he said.

"We in Umno should not be afraid with the way Pas is using Harakah to bad-mouth Umno and Umno leaders. We have many ulamas who can answer charges made by Pas," he said when debating the motion on religion at the general assembly. --BERNAMA

SJA RON ABG