

21 JUN 1998

Umno-Winding-up (Reaction)

ACCEPT PRESIDENT'S CLARIFICATION AS ADVICE, UMNO MEMBERS TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants Umno Youth to accept party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's clarification on nepotism and cronyism as an admonishment and advice.

"Accept it in good faith in the interest of the party. Don't turn it into an issue for prolonged dispute," he said after the close of Umno general assembly, here.

Dr Mahathir, when winding up the debate at the assembly today admonished Umno Youth for raising the issues of nepotism and cronyism in the mass media and expressed his regret that the movement did not heed his earlier request that the matter be discussed behind closed doors.

Abdullah said Umno Youth must remember the importance of using the party institutions like the supreme council for discussion and consensus for all matters which could affect the party.

He believed that all Umno Youth members were satisfied with the president's clarification and understood the true situation behind the issues raised.

In his closing speech Dr Mahathir explained at length the nepotism and cronyism issues raised by Umno Youth leader Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in his policy speech at the movement's assembly on Thursday.

Zahid had, among other things, claimed that there was nepotism and cronyism in the awarding of tenders and contracts by the big companies in the country.

Abdullah said Umno Youth should also realise that danger of politicising the matter because of the negative effects like disunity in the party.

Asked whether Umno Youth should apologise for its action, he said the prime minister himself did not ask for a apology.

Abdullah also expressed the need for the leaders to close ranks after the assembly.

Asked whether Umon Youth's action had tarnished the country's name, he said the repercussions might not be too bad as it was a new issue.

Wanita Umno leader Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said the issue should stop now as the party president had given a clarification.

She also agreed that all Umno members should accept the president's message and admonishment and use forums like the supreme council to discuss party problems.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said it was clear that Dr Mahathir wanted party leaders to use the supreme council as a channel to air their views and grievances.

" I cannot comment for Zahid but I believe he will take heed of what Dr Mahathir said in his winding-up speech," he said.

Asked whether action would be taken against Zahid, Supreme Council member Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman said Dr Mahathir's criticisms would suffice.

"In future, all problems must be raised at the supreme council meeting," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir was sincere in his criticisms and need to be taken as an advice.

Asked whether Zahid need to make a public apology, Dr Abdul Hamid said it was up to the Youth chief to settle the matter.

As an Umno leader, he could resolve the matter within the party channels, he said.

Another supreme council member Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said many council members were baffled to why the nepotism and cronyism issues were not raised at the council meetings but only in the newspapers.

She said Dr Mahathir's speech was a lesson to be learnt as such matters must be discussed at an appropriate forum.

The issues could be settled internally rather than publicising in the media, she added.

-- BERNAMA

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