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Mahathir-Anwar

ANWAR CAN PROVE ANYTHING HE LIKES, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, is free to produce evidence which he feels can clear his name on the various charges against him.

"Produce them, if there are evidence. We have no problem...you can prove anything that you like," he told reporters after visiting the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil, here.

He was asked to comment on Anwar's statement yesterday that he had evidence to prove that he was not guilty of charges of treason and corruption.

Anwar claimed that he had evidence kept in several places including overseas like in Indonesia.

Commenting on Anwar's roadshow, Dr Mahathir said it was not a problem as "we have due process of law".

"He goes out to conduct his campaign, they are his views...but when he is produced in court he shouldn't at the outset say that the court is unfair," he said.

"It is as if it is his defence...in the event that he is convicted, he will say "Ah, we know it already...the court is unfair, there is a conspiracy,"" he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was the strategy Anwar was using.

"And then he surrounds himself with people so that he thinks that way police cannot charge him before the court," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said it was obvious that Anwar was hoping that when he is charged, all his followers would gather at the courthouse and create problems.

"In other words, he doesn't respect the court at all," he said.

The prime minister said Anwar wants to use "that kind of pressure in order to prevent the police from taking what is due legal process".

Asked on the appointment of a new deputy prime minister, Dr Mahathir said it would not be easy to fill that position.

"We will need to give the opportunity to Umno to choose their leader...their assessment of a leader," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that if the position were to be filled now, before the Umno elections due next year, "he (the candidate) will have a certain advantage (in the party elections and) others will lose out".

Although he did not elaborate, it was obvious he was referring to the two Umno vice presidents, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"As such, we'll give them the opportunity," he said.

Asked as to who will be in charge when he goes abroad, Dr Mahathir said it would not be a problem.

"Before, both Datuk Seri Anwar and I had gone abroad, there were no problems. This (vacant post of DPM) is for a short while," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister also said there was no need to appoint an interim deputy prime minister.

Asked to comment on Anwar's statement that the police were acting like the Israeli intelligence agencies in conducting investigations, Dr Mahathir said he was sad that Anwar had made such allegations against the police.

He said that Anwar should not have compared the police in Malaysia to those in Israel.

"If we were to have that kind of police force, the people would suffer. But we can see that there are no problems...the people are free to move about.

"Is this a country that he describes?," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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