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Mahathir-Anwar

DR MAHATHIR THINKS ANWAR WILL NOT JOIN UMNO AGAIN

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad does not think that former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will join Umno again, considering the things he had said about the party after his dismissal from the government and party.

The prime minister also said that Anwar could run his own political party if the court acquitted him of the charges he is facing.

Dr Mahathir said this in a live interview over Biz Asia, a CNN programme, tonight.

He was responding to a question from anchorwoman Lorraine Hahn whether he was willing to take Anwar back if Anwar was found not guilty, or let him run his own political party.

Anwar is currently on trial on four charges of corrupt practice. He faces another charge of corrupt practice and five of sexual misconduct.

Commenting that Anwar's trial had provoked unprecedented worldwide attention and criticism from western and Asian leaders, Hahn asked whether this friction could break up regional cooperation.

Dr Mahathir said it might affect it for a while but it would not be lasting.

"Once the trial (of Anwar) is over, the people know what is right and what is wrong. I think their position on this issue will be resolved," he said.

Asked why he said that, Dr Mahathir replied: "I think we believe in working together, this kind of thing happens in every country. If we start criticising each other, we can never get on."

Asked whether he cared about what the world thought of him for speaking his mind, which had often received condemnation, Dr Mahathir said: "Of course I do, but then there are things that need to be said. If you want to be honest to yourself you must make criticism eventhough that will attract adverse comments from others."

Dr Mahathir also said that Anwar's dismissal had nothing to do with either economic or political challenges from Anwar but was because of moral issues.

"Politically I feel I can handle his so-called threat to my leadership because by and large the party is very supportive. As you can see, nobody has left the party," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that he had groomed Anwar all these years because he thought he was the best person to take over from him.

Asked on his successor, Dr Mahathir said Umno would decide who would take over should anything happen to him.

Dr Mahathir also gave an assurance that Anwar would get a fair trial as trials in Malaysian courts had always been fair.

To a question that he had been listed as a prosecution witness in Anwar's trial, he said he had not been asked to testify but he would if called.

Asked whether the Internal Security Act (ISA) was still necessary in this day and age, Dr Mahathir said: "The laws have actually been reviewed but we were still uncertain whether we can do away with these laws or not. But from time to time they will be reviewed."

Asked whether he was prepared to use the ISA against the international media who angered him as one newspaper reporter advocated, he said: "No, I think people are free to make any suggestion they want. If the government

wants to use the ISA on the media it would have used it long ago."
-- BERNAMA
ARA Jk