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DR MAHATHIR WANTS UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MEMBERS TO SPEAK UP AT MEETINGS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged Umno Supreme Council members to raise whatever issue or dissatisfaction they had particularly that which can jeopardise unity at the council meetings.

"Matters such as nepotism, crony capitalism and reforms should by right be raised at the Supreme Council meetings," he said in his winding up speech on the third and final day of the Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Every Supreme Council member was given the freedom to air his views at the party's highest policy making body and there was no reason why any member should not make full use of the opportunity, he said.

The Prime Minister said the Supreme Council held its meetings behind closed doors to enable members to speak freely without any restriction which they would not be able to do if the meeting was held in the open.

"I feel sad that the Umno Supreme Council was not used fully to discuss issues which were serious and dangerous but were instead raised outside," said Dr Mahathir apparently referring to points raised by Umno Youth head Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Prime Minister said that he himself raised the issue of nepotism and cronyism at the Umno Supreme Council meeting in May after finding that such issues had been mentioned in the newspapers.

Dr Mahathir stressed that any problem or doubts could be raised and resolved within the Umno Supreme Council and there was no need to talk outside as this would only reflect on the party and the country.

Dr Mahathir said these matters about nepotism and cronyism were not brought to the attention of the Supreme Council... for members of the council are the witnesses that these matters were never mentioned.

"I raised these matters at the Supreme Council meeting last May so that they can be discussed," he said.

"I raised these matters so that we can discuss them and I gave them the opportunity. Some members spoke but unfortunately the Umno Youth Chief did not say much," he said.

"He only said that newspaper reports on the issue were inaccurate. He was again given the opportunity to wind up. He did not want to say anything. He said he was under immense pressure and did not want to speak," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he thought the matter had been settled.

Dr Mahathir said that later Zahid had raised the same issues outside and had indicated that he would speak about them during the Umno Youth General Assembly on June 18.

"This means we are not willing to speak inside...we speak outside and this will have a bad effect on the party."

"I invited him to see me and I thought the matter had been settled but it was not settled."

"I feel that once you are a member of the Supreme Council you don't need any bridge. If you have no confidence in the Supreme Council members then see me as it is our problem," he said to loud applause from delegates.

Dr Mahathir said party leaders should safeguard the party and rectify problems.

"If we go outside and raise the matters they will not be resolved. The accused person will feel disappointed and will respond," he added.

Dr Mahathir said although he occupied a high post, this did not mean he could not be approached by Supreme Council members, especially party leaders.

He said they should use the council to speak up and air views sincerely.

"I believe that those who are elected as Supreme Council members love the party. They don't have any bad intention but the way they go about showing their love for the party should not lead to the party being destroyed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that when a leader spoke in a similar vein as foreign critics he more or less acknowledged the things said by them.

"Last year who spoke about nepotism and cronism? Nobody. At the time time we have not heard (of these words) not because the words did not exist. They were there but not widely used by foreign papers and magazines," he said.

However, he said, the word 'nepotism' was mentioned by foreign magazines this year because there was a country that applied the word to bring down its government.

Dr Mahathir said the style of politics and rule beteen that country and Malaysia was widely different, especially in the election of people's representatives.

He said the word nepotism was used by foreigners to undermine the New Economic Policy after they find that Malaysia had succeeded in raising the standard of the poor.

-- BERNAMA

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