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Dr M: Umno will investigate contents of book on Anwar

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UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the party will investigate whether the contents of the book, disparaging his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, have any basis.

The Prime Minister said Umno would also like to find out the reason why the book was written.

"We want to know who did it, why he did it and whether what he stated has any basis and whether the owner of the premises is involved," Dr Mahathir said at a news conference at the end of the second day of the Umno general assembly.

He was commenting on the statement by Jempol (Negri Sembilan) Umno Youth chief Ruslan Kassim at the assembly that the premises owned by a former party leader were used to publish the book allegedly defaming Anwar.

On Ruslan's statement that several staff at the party headquarters could be involved in the book's distribution, Dr Mahathir said the secretariat would investigate.

On whether action would be taken against Umno members involved in the printing and distribution of the book, he said it was up to the party's Management and Disciplinary Committee.

The committee is headed by Anwar.

On whether the parties responsible for the printing and distribution of the book would be detained under the Internal Security Act, he said: "We don't use the ISA that way".

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said the ISA is used against those involved in dadah and cases like passport forgery.

Ruslan said his check with the Registrar of Companies revealed that the publisher of 50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM (50 Reasons why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister) had rented the premises for the operations.

"Based on the information from the ROC, they (the directors) are Puan Hajjah Zabedah Haji Abdullah and Tuan Haji Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik, the owner of Seri RTC Sdn Bhd," he said when identifying the owners of the premises.

Ruslan also said he was informed by the Federal Territory Umno that the Umno secretariat was used to distribute the books to the delegates.

"We could not believe that the book, slandering our party's second in command (Anwar) which had been restrained from distribution through a court injunction, was circulated openly after the court order was obtained on June 17," he added.

Ruslan criticised those involved in the publication of the book for ignoring and ridiculing the court order.

He said he would hand over the evidence on those involved in the book's publication to Dr Mahathir for action.

The book is authored by Khalid Jafri and published by Media Pulau Lagenda. Khalid was a former sports editor of Utusan Malaysia and editor-in-chief of the defunct Harian Nasional tabloid.

When contacted, former Umno Youth chief and former Malacca Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik said he was aware of allegations that he and his wife, Puan Sri Zabedah Abdullah, were involved in the publication of the book.

He said he would make "specific statements" on this and other related matters on Monday.

Ruslan also touched on talks of attempts to topple the party leadership from within.

"There are talks that there is a movement to change the number one (Dr Mahathir). Some are alleging that the attempts were initiated by the number two (Anwar) because he could not stand the leadership of number one and there was a need for a reformation of the party and country's leadership.

"However, we find it strange that most of the poison-pen letters and books were written to discredit the number two."

Regarding Dr Mahathir's confidence in Anwar's leadership and the former's desire to hand over the party leadership to Anwar, Ruslan said: "It is impossible that the number one wants to bring down the number two whom he has been grooming for the past 11 years

"Therefore, who is actually behind this `Jade drama'?"

Bernamea quoted Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik as saying that Umno headquarters was were investigating allegations that its staff were involved in the distribution of the book.

He said the party's headquarters was were not involved in the book's distribution to the delegates.

"Maybe one or two persons were involved ... we do not know."

Meanwhile, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali said today that the Home Ministry would seek Umno's co-operation to investigate the distribution of the book allegedly defaming Anwar.

Tajol Rosli said this was to find out whether the book was distributed before or after the court order halting its distribution to the public.

A delegate had claimed that several secretariat staff at party headquarters were involved in distributing the book by placing it inside the complementary bags given to delegates.

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