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Mahathir advises Umno delegates to be responsible

Kamarul Yunus

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on Umno delegates to be responsible for what they say and accept the consequences.

"They must accept the responsibility for what they say," he told newsmen after briefing Umno delegates in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Umno will be holding its 52nd general assembly for four days, starting with the Wanita and Youth meetings today.

Explaining that his remarks should not be construed as a threat or directive to the delegates, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said they (delegates) are free to talk on anything they like but they must make sure that there are basis for what they say.

"There is no threat ... we are just asking people to be responsible, that is all. Sometimes people say things without any basis and when something happened they would say 'Well, I did not know'. That is not acceptable.

"Umno members must be responsible. Whatever the consequences, like if their action causes a split in the party, weaken or make it incapable, they must accept the responsibility.

"If they have the proof to back up what they say then it is okay. This shows that they are responsible," he added.

On the likelihood that issues concerning cronyism and nepotism are expected to dominate the party's assembly, Dr Mahathir reiterated that the delegates can bring up these issues but they must make sure they have the facts right.

Asked whether he foresees a split in the party if the delegates were to bring up such issues, Dr Mahathir said:

"There are people who say things which they cannot prove ... very general kind of accusation which may raise suspicion. This is bad for the country. However, there is nothing to stop them from saying."

On remarks by Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi last week who described nepotism as the practice of big corporations sub-contracting privatization projects to related companies, Dr Mahathir said he is quite sure that the former is "responsible when he says it".

On whether he will support a possible motion from the delegates that there should not be any contest for the party's top two posts, Dr Mahathir said:

"No, I am not in support (of the motion) but I cannot stop from doing it because that is undemocratic. But as far as I am concern, I am quite open for contest."

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