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Mahathir - Umno

FOREIGN INSTIGATORS SERIOUSLY THREATENING UMNO UNITY, SAYS MAHATHIR

SEREMBAN, July 21 (Bernama) -- Instigations by external elements are posing a serious threat to Umno unity as some party members are inclined to subscribe to accusations hurled by foreign instigators, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said if Umno members themselves allowed accusations by foreigners to gain credence, this would only serve as a weapon to stab Umno yet again.

"When our own people acknowledge the charges, what more the opposition, they welcome them with joy as they're provided with an issue to attack us. In Arau (the July 4 parliamentary by-election) this is the issue," he said.

(The governing Barisan Nasional lost the Arau seat, its traditional stronghold, to PAS in the by-election).

The prime minister, who is on a one-day working visit to the state, was speaking at a press conference after a closed-door meeting with Negeri Sembilan Umno divisional leaders, youth and women's wings chiefs and party information officers at the Wisma Negeri theaterette here.

Dr Mahathir said that at times, upon receiving an information, party members failed to discern and scrutinise it for a hidden agenda.

"There are people with ill intentions but because they are articulate speakers, we fail to notice their ill will...this ill will is hidden," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were Umno members who could not grasp what the foreigners were up to despite the latter denying their ill intentions.

"They have always been maintaining that they mean well and uphold transparency but they make baseless charges. This we have to explain to Umno members," he said.

He said the foreign media had charged that Umno was practising cronyism and nepotism and that the New Economic Policy was a manifestation of such practices despite the policy bringing about all-round benefits.

Asked whether there is a limit to transparency, Dr Mahathir said transparency was necessary.

However, he said, when foreigners insisted that Malaysia be transparent but not them, this meant they were practising double standard.

Dr Mahathir said at today's meeting with the state Umno leadership, he emphasised the party's role in remaining consolidated and united and being repulsive to instigations by foreigners which could split Umno.

Dr Mahathir said the way for Umno to deal with the threat posed by foreign instigators was by educating the public about it as Umno is a mass-movement and it could not afford to act as an elitist party.

The prime minister said he would visit each state to keep the people updated on the matter.

Towards that end he had already visited Melaka and Kedah and Umno leaders there now had a better understanding of the matter, Dr Mahathir added.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad was among those who attended the meeting.

-- BERNAMA

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