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Mahathir-Gathering

GATHERING: UMNO ACCEPTS POLICE DECISION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Umno will abide by the police directive that there be no public rallies on Saturday, its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

He said Umno would abide by the requirements of the law and the police who had the responsibility to enforce it.

The rally planned for Saturday was to have been attended by more than 150,000 people including Barisan Nasional component party members to express support for Dr Mahathir.

"I am a citizen who abides by directives. If the police say there can be no gatherings, I have to accept the decision. I have to be exemplary," he told reporters after chairing a meeting of the Umno Supreme Council here.

The two-hour rally at the Stadium Nasional in Bukit Jalil was to have included an address by the Prime Minister on current issues, cultural shows and the singing of patriotic songs.

Dr Mahathir also said Umno would abide by the High Court directive that no statements be made on the guilt or innocence of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim outside the context of his trial.

"We have decided not to discuss the charges made against Anwar. We respect the court," he said.

The Prime Minister said the court ruling did not apply to him alone but to everyone including Anwar's supporters.

Dr Mahathir said the council also reviewed the country's current political and economic situation.

He said the council felt that Umno was not adversely affected by the current situation in the country as party members remained united and had accepted the decisions that had been made by the council.

Dr Mahathir, when asked about the U.S. State Department request for better treatment for Anwar and respect for human rights, said: "We are not beholden to them."

"We run our country in our own way... we also have quite a number of things we would like to tighten up and we think that if we mind our own business, it will be better for everybody," he said.

"Before we rail publicly... have the courtesy to ask what is actually happening in the ground... before making public statements that may even affect the court," he said when asked if the Americans did not get a clear picture of the situation in this country.

To a question on what he (Dr Mahathir) would convey to President Clinton, the Prime Minister said he had written to Clinton when the latter asked for his support over the US missile attack on Sudan and Afghanistan.

Dr Mahathir said he was not in the position to support such actions because there was no proof that the pharmaceutical factory that was blasted in Sudan was producing nerve gas or chemicals.

"I consider that as a violation of human rights. Similarly, one should not fire missiles over a country which has no problem with your own country."

"People should be careful about firing missiles over other countries because these missiles are not perfect. It might drop and do damage to countries over which they are passing on their way to their target," he said.

--BERNAMA

RAZ/SHO AAM