

05 OCT 1998

Najib-Gathering

GATHERING TO INCLUDE BN PARTIES, NGOs, PUBLIC- NAJIB

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5 (Bernama) -- The gathering to express support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad scheduled for Oct 10 will include all Barisan Nasional component parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and members of the public and not limited to just BN youth.

Chairman of the Committee coordinating the gathering, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today more than 150,000 people were expected to attend the gathering at the Stadium Nasional in Bukit Jalil.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a special meeting of BN Youth secretaries, Najib who is also Umno vice-president said that the Prime Minister had decided that the gathering be held to demonstrate widespread support and backing for the Barisan Nasional government.

Najib said that Dr Mahathir, who is also BN Chairman, wanted the gathering to be coordinated by everyone in the Barisan Nasional.

He also said that the organiser of the gathering would get a police permit.

"We will get the police permit beforehand. Hence this will not be an illegal assembly," Najib said.

He said the Prime Minister would speak at the two-hour gathering to begin at 4.50pm.

He said of the 150,000 expected to attend the gathering, some 50,000 would be from Umno, 20,000 to 30,000 from the MCA, 10,000 from the MIC and the rest would comprise other BN component parties, NGO members and members of the public.

"The response from Umno divisions and branches to the gathering has been very encouraging," Najib said.

He said the State Umno Liaison Committees would provide buses to ferry the people to the stadium but Umno members and those of BN component parties outside of Kuala Lumpur were encouraged to find their own transport.

On the public's involvement in the assembly, Najib said the organiser of the gathering would not prevent BN supporters from attending and was in fact encouraging them to do so.

Najib said the gathering would demonstrate that support among the people and BN component parties for the leadership of Dr Mahathir had not eroded as claimed by the foreign media.

"We want to show to the world that the Prime Minister still enjoys strong, solid and overwhelming support," he said.

Asked whether supporters of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim would create trouble at the gathering, Najib hoped this would not take place.

Nevertheless the organiser would ensure security and would seek cooperation from the police, he said.

Asked whether the police decision to issue a permit to the organiser of the gathering would be considered police double standards as they had previously disapproved applications from Anwar's supporters to hold gatherings, Najib said the BN gathering was well organised and was not aimed at inciting the people to hate the government.

Asked whether the High Court's view that from today no public comments be made on the guilt or innocence of Anwar, would affect the gathering, Najib said the Umno Supreme Council would discuss this at its meeting

tomorrow.

"If the court had expressed its view, we have to take into account and see what we can do (whether to go ahead with the gathering)...it will be based on the interpretation of the court's view," he said.

Umno Youth acting head Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein and several Umno Youth executive committee members inspected the Stadium Nasional today.

Speaking to reporters, he denied a lot of money would be spent on organising the gathering and said there would be no renovation to the stadium for the purpose.

"What is necessary is the spirit and commitment from the people," he said.

On security, Hishammuddin said the relevant authorities had been informed and emergency precautions would be in place.

Hishammuddin who is Deputy Primary Industries Minister denied claims that he was using the gathering as a front to project himself as the next head of Umno Youth.

"The important thing is the aim of this gathering and whether I get support or otherwise depends on the Umno Youth executive committee," he said.

The position of Umno Youth head fell vacant with the resignation of Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"This will be the biggest and final gathering of its kind before the curtain falls on this century and I will bring along my children," he added.

--BERNAMA

SLR AAM