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Mahathir - list

MAHATHIR SAYS HIS FAMILY COULD BE FILTHY RICH IF HE'S NEPOTIC

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said his own family could have been very wealthy had he been practising nepotism and cronyism all the while that he is Prime Minister.

"I can show the condition of my family, in fact they have been subject to discrimination, indeed if they were to ask for something, I'll make sure they won't get it," he said.

"I have been prime minister for 17 years and if I have been giving my family, they would have been very wealthy by now," he said when winding up debate on the last day of Umno's 52nd general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

The Umno president said, his son, for instance, was once nominated to stand as a Member of Parliament but he rejected the move on the ground that the son was unfit for the position.

He acknowledged that his children were allocated company shares but this should not be regarded as cronyism as they did not get as much as the others.

Dr Mahathir said he was making this comparison with a situation in a neighbouring country where the children of its former leader secured all the contracts making them super-rich.

On the list of those awarded contracts for privatised government projects which Umno released yesterday, Dr Mahathir said it showed that not only a few had benefited but everyone.

"All sorts of people (from all levels) got them. Some got on three occasions and even so not on their own but with others. There are names which we are not even familiar because we want to distribute wealth to all," he said.

He admitted that some had secured more contracts because of their capability and not out of favouritism.

The incapable ones could not be awarded contracts because they could only cause all-round damage, the prime minister said.

He said that if the government had its way it would want to farm out all the contracts to those who deserved to get them.

Dr Mahathir also apologised to Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi whose name was also listed down.

"I apologise to Zahid as his name is on the list but he has already explained that it is not him who gets it but had lent his name to the movement even before he assumed leadership of the movement," Dr Mahathir said.

However, Dr Mahathir said, people reading the list would react: "Aha, he gets it too. We often have this prejudice against something even before checking what it is all about and upon checking we realise that what we presumed is untrue."

The prime minister said party members were now aware that not only one or two people were given the opportunities but everyone who had the ability.

These opportunities were not only relating to privatised projects but also allocations of company shares, Dr Mahathir said.

There were party members who were not allocated shares but there were Tan Sris and Datuks (titled dignitaries) who got them because they were made company chairmen or directors, he said.

Some of them received substantial share allocations because they had

special agreements with non-Bumiputera companies in recognition of the restructuring of those companies, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the lists released were those dating back from 1993 and a further scrutiny would show that more people had secured opportunities in the earlier years.

-- BERNAMA

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