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Malicious rumours being spread on Internet, says PM

Adeline Ong

CALLING on Malaysians to be united and calm, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said last night some quarters have been spreading "malicious rumours" about riots taking place in the country.

Through the Internet, certain groups of people are also trying to bring about chaos by pitting Muslims and non-Muslims against one another.

"(These) are done purposely to create chaos in the country... by people who call out "fire" or "wolf". These are lies," he told a news conference after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

He asked Malaysians not to be easily influenced by what they read on the Internet, especially on talk of trouble brewing in the country.

"This is a problem we are facing now... the usage of Internet to spread poison pen letters, the modern way... This is a freedom which has been highly lauded by the West as a human right to create chaos in the society. They are happy when certain people create problems in our country."

Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Kamaruddin Md Ali had earlier denied a rumour that there were disturbances in the Chow Kit area.

He said police received several calls from the public saying there were disturbances in the area.

"This did not take place," he said, advising the people not to listen to such talk.

Kamaruddin said this was the work of rumour-mongers and the police are carrying out investigations against them.

Police would not hesitate to detain those involved and charge them in court, he added.

Dr Mahathir also expressed concern with attempts to undermine Islam and frighten the non-Muslims. He said the people behind these included lecturers and ulamas, people who considered themselves religious, and also people with no Islamic background but with access to the Internet.

"They are doing this... to instigate Muslims and non-Muslims. Although it is not very effective, it is being done," he added.

When asked what Umno could do, the party president said Umno will try to help explain the teachings of Islam in accordance to the Quran and hadith. Umno will also request that state governments allow only qualified lecturers to conduct classes.

When told of panic-buying at a number of shops in Kuala Lumpur caused by the rumours of the riots, Dr Mahathir said: "This will happen more frequently because there are irresponsible parties who purposely create chaos in Malaysia. They are traitors."

Asked how much more Malaysia should put up with this, Dr Mahathir responded: "What can we do? If we can do something, we will do it... we are checking what goes on the Internet... some of them have got addresses on them but those without address are difficult (to trace)."

The Umno supreme council meeting also discussed the state of the economy and Malaysia's ties with Singapore, which are now strained due to a series of bilateral problems.

"The Umno supreme council supports the Government's stand on Singapore," he added.

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