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Mahathir-Cronyism

NO CRONYISM IN GOVT, MAHATHIR SAYS IT AGAIN

ALOR SETAR, July 2 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated today that there are no nepotism and cronyism practices in government administration.

The Prime Minister said certain groups were harping on the issues to topple the present government leadership for their own interests.

"The allegations were originally made by the foreign media but there were people from Umno who took up the issues for their own interest as they saw the opportunity to promote themselves by highlighting the issues," he said when speaking at a meet-the-people gathering at Wisma Darul Aman, here.

More than 5,000 people including Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman and state Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders attended the gathering.

Dr Mahathir said the allegations were made in haste without studying the actual situation.

" We don't become leaders to enrich our children or friends," he said.

Citing the development of Langkawi as an example, he said: " If leaders gave priority for their personal gains, I would have bought hundreds of hectares of land for a very low price before Langkawi was declared a duty-free island and later sell them for a very high price.

" But instead the government developed Langkawi and other places quietly," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he could enrich his children and friends through development projects carried out by the government if he had wanted to do so.

In this regard, he challenged those who harped on nepotism and cronyism practices to check the records whether his children or friends had benefited from his position as Prime Minister.

He said he was saddened by the allegations made by the group which only advanced the aspirations of the people who wanted to colonise the country once the government leadership became weak due to splits in the ruling party.

He said the groups' either knowingly or unknowingly had been used as a tool by external forces.

He said their actions would result in splits and weaken Umno and the ruling BN government.

"This will make the government weak in fighting the attacks on the country's economy as we are now under even stronger pressure as compared to the recession in 1985," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he and other government leaders were "cracking their heads" to find solutions to the economic problems besetting the country.

Hence, he urged the people to unite and support the government's initiatives to stimulate the economy.

Dr Mahathir also said the allegations were one way to attack and divide Umno and arouse the people's anger against government leaders.

He said all this while the government had a strong political organisation so much so that outsiders found it hard to cause disunity in Umno and the BN.

He urged the people to uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the country.

-- BERNAMA

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