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Mahathir - assembly

STAND BY WHAT YOU SAY, MAHATHIR REMINDS DELEGATES

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Umno delegates to the party's general assembly, which starts with the Youth and Wanita conferences tomorrow, to be fully responsible for what they say there.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said his reminder was not to gag them but to ensure that they would stand by what they said.

That responsibility would also require delegates to be prepared to bear the consequences from their remarks, Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister was speaking at a press conference here after a closed-door pre-council presidential briefing to the Umno delegates on the eve of the general assembly.

"The briefing was merely to explain and not to issue directives on what delegates can speak about. It was only to emphasise that it is vital for them to be responsible for what they say and if something happens arising from what they said, they must be responsible," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked whether delegates speaking about nepotism and cronyism would face the consequences, Dr Mahathir said: "If they cause split within the party and lead to certain actions against certain people, then they are to be responsible."

Dr Mahathir dismissed suggestions that his briefing was to threaten the delegates, saying "we are asking people to be responsible".

Dr Mahathir said there were people only good at talking but would disclaim responsibility the moment something happened saying they did not expect the consequence.

"We want responsible Umno members," he said in a serious tone saying this applied to all.

Asked whether those not standing by what they said could be voted out, Dr Mahathir said: "That is one of the possibilities... of course but then there are a lot of other things that can happen... I mean, because of him the party becomes weak and incapable or something like that, that is his responsibility also."

Explaining what he meant by an irresponsible speech, Dr Mahathir said: "We see people saying things which they cannot prove, very general kind of accusation which has the effect of raising suspicion and yet not substantiated.

"I think it's very bad for the party," he said.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi last week raised the issue of nepotism and cronyism in the awarding of contracts for government projects.

Commenting on Ahmad Zahid's claims, Dr Mahathir said: "I'm quite sure he will be responsible when he say that.

"Everybody will be responsible and I will be responsible for what I say also. I cannot go there (the general assembly) and say something which will hurt the party and then say I'm sorry as I didn't realise this is going to happen," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister said he also briefed the delegates on the allocation of development projects of which some parties accused the government of favouritism.

"We explain that what we're trying to do is not to make everyone rich but what we're doing is to ensure that the on the inter-racial pyramid the strata distribution is more or less the same," he said.

Also present at the press conference were Umno deputy president Datuk

Seri Anwar Ibrahim and information chief Datuk Dr Yusof Nor.

Meanwhile, when approached later, Ahmad Zahid said he would still speak on nepotism and cronyism in his address at tomorrow's Umno Youth conference.

Anwar as party deputy president, as traditionally, is scheduled to simultaneously open the conferences of the youth and women's wings tomorrow.

-- BERNAMA

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