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Mahathir-Contract

UMNO LEADERS RECEIVE LIST OF PRIVATISED PROJECTS' RECIPIENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the party has released the list of people who have been awarded privatised projects to ward off accusations that the government practises nepotism and cronyism.

"There are literally hundreds of them and quite obviously they are not cronies of us (Dr Mahathir and his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim).

"We may know some of them but there is no way we can be very intimate to them unless you define cronies as anybody who gets anything from the government becomes a crony," Dr Mahathir told a news conference at the end of the second day of the Umno general assembly here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the list handed out to Umno division chiefs during the assembly today.

"It is the beginning," he said.

The prime minister said the party would release another list consisting of those who received shares allocation, Approved Permits for the importation of vehicles and licences.

"All will be revealed so that we will know who exactly benefited from policies formulated by the government," said Dr Mahathir.

Asked why the list was being distributed now, Dr Mahathir said Umno has been accused of practising nepotism and cronyism.

"We will see from the list who benefited, whether they are cronies or the sons or daughters of the leaders," he said.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had claimed that nepotism and cronyism was practised in the awarding of some privatised projects. The foreign media and the opposition had also accused the government of such practices.

Asked if the list contained the names of people related or connected to senior Umno leaders, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, there are. But they are not exclusive. Like anybody else who do business, they are entitled but it is not given by Umno leaders."

He said the party's practice was that if any of the leaders' relatives were involved, the leaders will not be allowed to participate in deciding who gets the privatised projects.

"It is not as if certain people are given everything. Everybody has a fair share," said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said the list of privatised projects' beneficiaries had been available all this while through the Registrar of Companies and others.

The list is not a restricted information, but the public were more interested to make their own perception about cronyism and nepotism in the government, he said.

"We are not guilty of cronysim and nepotism although this does not mean we should discriminate against anyone just because he has connections with the leaders. If he has the capability, he has the right like all the others," he said.

The Prime Minister said the lists were obtained from the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Entrepreneur Development.

On the possibility that some names could be missed, he said: "I do not know if any have been left out but we requested for all including the name

of my son. If you like, you can go and see how many hundreds of times he has been given."

As to when the second list would be released, he said: "We are preparing the details. We will release more tomorrow."

Dr Mahathir said it was not the government's duty to release the names periodically.

He said that the lists were released during the on-going general assembly because the cronyism and nepotism were hot issues now.

When asked if direct awarding of contracts to one party instead of calling for tenders will continue in certain projects, he said when someone makes a proposal that has cost him a lot, it would be very unfair to pass it to everybody else.

"He gets first preference unless we disagree with what he proposes. Then the project may be open to others but when the government makes the proposal, it is always open to everybody," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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