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Dr M: Discuss issues within Supreme Council

PRIME Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said important issues such as "nepotism" and "cronyism" should have been brought to the attention and discussed in the privacy of the party's Supreme Council.

"We should not discuss this in the open because it presents a bad image of the party, and can be used by opposition parties as well as enemies outside the country to prove that what they said all along has basis," he said.

In his winding-up speech at the Umno General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said these issues should have been discussed within the Supreme Council where there are no outsiders, and members are free to speak as there are no restrictions.

"These meetings are not 'make believe'. We meet for hours, sometimes from 9pm to 4am, and give the opportunity for all to talk," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had brought up the issue of nepotism and cronyism to the council in May after one Supreme Council member raised the matter in a newspaper article.

"Some members spoke, but the Umno Youth chief did not say much, other than to say that the newspapers did not report it properly," he said.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had repeatedly alleged that nepotism and cronyism existed in the party, and drew attention when he raised these issues again in his speech at the movement's assembly on Thursday.

"This means he did not want to discuss it in the Supreme Council meeting but wanted to discuss it outside, even if it destroyed the party. If you are already a Supreme Council member, there is no need to use any bridges. We are party leaders. If something is not right we can fix it," Dr Mahathir said.

He urged Supreme Council members to use the council meetings to talk openly as they love the party, but not to show their love in a manner that is destructive to the party.

Dr Mahathir said the situation in Malaysia is not similar to that in Indonesia, where accusations of nepotism and cronyism were used bring down the Government.

"Our country is different. We have a different system. In Malaysia no one can be Prime Minister without being chosen by the people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if these critics are talking about reform against corruption and nepotism, this is not reform. "We have been against these things for a long time. We know they are wrong and have long rejected them."

The Prime Minister said that is why the list of companies and individuals awarded privatization projects was distributed on Saturday, to prove that the Government gives projects to as many as possible so there is no favouritism.

Dr Mahathir apologised to Zahid because his name is on the list. The Umno Youth chief had earlier clarified that he is only the trustee for the movement's stake in Pantai Dalam Sdn Bhd, which was given a project to redevelop Kampung Haji Abdullah Hukum in Kuala Lumpur. Zahid said he did not receive any shares in the project.

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