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Mahathir-Zahid

ZAHID ACCEPTS DR MAHATHIR'S EXPLANATION ON NEPOTISM ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that the issue of nepotism and cronyism need not be raised again as Umno Youth Chief Datuk Zahid Hamidi had accepted his explanation on this and the issue is now considered settled.

The Prime Minister said he had explained to Zahid that nepotism and cronyism did not exist in Malaysia and details of this and lists of the people who had received shares and so on were distributed to the delegates to the Umno General Assembly from June 19 to 21.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the Umno Supreme Council at the party headquarters here, Dr Mahathir who is Umno president, said the Umno Youth head now understood the actual situation.

"There is no longer any misunderstanding and Datuk Zahid himself no longer believes there is nepotism and cronyism in Malaysia."

"There is no nepotism and cronyism in Malaysia. Only foreigners and the foreign media are making such allegations of nepotism and cronyism," he added.

Dr Mahathir said initially there was indeed some doubt among Umno Youth members "but after we had disclosed all details about the matter, it is clear there is no such practice in Malaysia."

"This question does not arise anymore," the Prime Minister said.

Zahid had earlier claimed that there was cronyism in the award of contracts and also nepotism when addressing the Umno Youth General Assembly.

Asked whether the issue of nepotism and cronyism need not be raised again by Umno members following his explanation to Zahid, Dr Mahathir then directed this question to Zahid who was present at the news conference.

Zahid said: "Already resolved."

Dr Mahathir said he had explained to Zahid and Umno Supreme Council members that the situation in Malaysia differed from that in Jakarta which saw Suharto resign as President of Indonesia.

On the defeat of the Barisan Nasional (BN) in the Arau Parliamentary by-election on Saturday, Dr Mahathir said over confidence and weak campaigning were among the causes for the defeat.

"Umno was over confident that it can retain the Arau constituency in view of the big win there previously and hence the Umno campaign was weak and so PAS was able to win over the voters," he said.

In the by-election that followed the death of the MP from the BN Kamaruddin Ahmad on May 25, the BN candidate Ismail Kassim of Umno lost to PAS' Hashim Jasin by 1,323 votes.

Dr Mahathir said the defeat was a timely reminder to Umno members.

"It's a good thing, a good reminder for us... if there is no defeat, we will forget it," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN Chairman, said PAS really focused on the seat and enlisted the help of many supporters including those from Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu.

Eventhough the Umno candidate had the support of Umno leaders from other places, the work schedule was not carried out well, he said.

Asked whether the PAS win in Arau indicated that it had a big influence in northern Peninsular Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said it was a by-election and certainly PAS was out to win it.

"To PAS the win was a major success for them," he said.

Asked whether there were traitors in Umno who caused the BN candidate to lose, Dr Mahathir said, "We cannot say they are traitors... we will have a post mortem and (Menteri Besar) Datuk Seri Shahidan, will submit a report."

He also rejected claims there was a split among Umno members in Perlis.

"No split as such, at times there is some dissatisfaction... I feel there was some outside pressure," he said.

He said Umno took a serious view of this matter and would take follow-up action to ensure PAS did not succeed.

Asked whether the defeat was because the candidate was the younger brother of the Perlis Menteri Besar, the Prime Minister said, "It was just a coincidence. If there was other eligible candidate we will have fielded him."

Meanwhile Shahidan said Perlis Umno was finalising the report or post mortem on the defeat of the BN candidate in Arau and it was expected to be ready by the next Umno Supreme Council meeting.

-- BERNAMA

ES/WNZ AAM