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Mahathir-Demonstration

ANWAR'S POISONING CLAIM TO AGITATE SUPPORTERS, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's claim that he had been poisoned could be aimed at getting his followers to demonstrate in the streets again.

The Prime Minister said this could be one of three reasons for the former deputy prime minister to make the allegation as he realised that the people's support for him was waning.

"To make them (his supporters) angry and agitated, he claimed he had been poisoned," he told reporters after officiating at the Kelab Golf Kakitangan Awam and the Civil Service family day here.

Dr Mahathir said the allegation of arsenic poisoning was also to prolong Anwar's sodomy trial which had been going on for some time.

He said it was also to blacken the name of the government at the time of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in New Zealand and the recent Commonwealth Law Conference in Malaysia.

He said this when asked to comment on today's street protests staged by Anwar's supporters to back their calls for independent investigations into claims that Anwar was suffering from arsenic poisoning while in custody.

Similar demonstrations were also held on Sept 11 and yesterday.

Asked if the poison issue was raised in the hope of deterring him from calling for election, Dr Mahathir said: "No, it is mainly to keep the case (trial) going because if and when the case is over the people can make comments."

"He doesn't want us to say anything during the election campaign."

He pointed out that Anwar's wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail had also claimed that the government could inject Anwar with the AIDS virus when he was arrested.

"There may be some evidence of arsenic poisoning but when you take shell fish you get arsenic in your urine; there may be some but the main thing is to agitate his followers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Anwar was also behind the 1974 student demonstrations by alleging that a child had died of starvation in Baling, Kedah.

He said although the allegation was proven false, it had made students angry and they protested.

Dr Mahathir said if Anwar did not resort to this, the Wan Azizah-led Parti Keadilan Nasional would not get support.

"People who joined Keadilan were seen rejoining Umno and some dissolved the party (local branches). They (those who rejoined Umno) know there is no basis to the claim that there was a conspiracy against him," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said Anwar should submit fully to medical tests to prove his claim of arsenic poisoning because it was a very damaging allegation against the government.

"Now he does not want to give full access to his body to check and verify his arsenic poisoning claim. I believe there are three or four tests, the nail, hair and bone marrow, to check the arsenic poisoning," he said.

Asked on the recent arrest of Anwar's former family driver Azizan Abu Bakar for khalwat (close proximity), Dr Mahathir said he believed somebody was watching Azizan closely.

"I think all will be done to discredit this witness," he said of Azizan, a prosecution witness in the corruption trial of Anwar.

Last April, Anwar was found guilty in the corruption case and sentenced

to six years' jail.

His sodomy trial at the High Court here was adjourned on Sept 10 after his lawyer told the court that laboratory test results showed a high level of arsenic in Anwar's urine sample.

-- BERNAMA

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