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Keeping tabs on `revelations'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Umno members who wish to make revelations on more alleged wrongdoings of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim must first refer the matter to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad before they can be made public.

This is to enable the president to determine whether the prospective disclosures are backed by strong evidence, Dr Mahathir told a Press conference after chairing the party's supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn at the Putra World Trade Centre here tonight.

Dr Mahathir said the move was necessary as the revelations could lead to legal suits which could only be defended if there was adequate evidence.

"Some of the charges could be from personal experiences (involving Anwar) which will then be a case of one's words against another. That's why we have to make sure that any exposure on Anwar are accompanied by documentary evidence," said the Prime Minister.

Following the statutory declaration by former Bank Negara assistant governor Datuk Abdul Murad Khalid that Anwar had amassed RM3 billion in several master accounts while serving with the Government, some Umno members said they planned to expose more alleged wrongdoings by Anwar.

Asked what type of evidence was needed to back the exposure, Dr Mahathir said it could be anything that could substantiate the disclosures.

Asked whether any exposure on the former deputy prime minister and finance minister was raised at tonight's meeting, Dr Mahathir said some members spoke on several cases but they had been directed to gather the evidence first.

"We have to be careful in this," he said, expressing confidence that the necessary documentary evidence could be gathered.

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on whether the statutory declaration of Norhayati Md Yusof denying that she had intimate relations with Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik was a move to clear the name of the former Malacca Chief Minister. Dr Mahathir said he was not aware of any such move.

He said the woman made the declaration probably because Anwar had mentioned her in his ongoing sodomy trial.

"Probably she did not like her name to be linked. We did not talk about it. It is up to the public to accept her disclosure or not."

On speculations that the general election will be held next year, Dr Mahathir said: "It might, it might not. I have no inspiration yet."

Dr Mahathir also announced that the supreme council had approved the setting up of 30 new branches.

He added that he would be visiting several places soon mainly to meet party workers.

The issue of university students rejecting the Government's proposal on the establishment of a National Student Consultative Council was also raised at the Press conference.

Responding, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said no action would be taken against the students as the proposed council was to give them an avenue to air their grievances.

Abdullah, who is assuming the duties of Umno deputy president, said: "If they decide to reject the offer after consulting non-governmental organisations or political parties, the decision is theirs."

Details of the consultative council were being worked out and once

finalised, would be discussed with Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

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