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Mahathir-Surprise

LET THE SURPRISE BE A SURPRISE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is not giving away even an iota of a hint about a surprise announcement he is speculated to make during the Umno general assembly starting here tomorrow.

"If I tell you it won't be a surprise," he said.

Reporters persistently tried to elicit from Dr Mahathir any hint about the surprise announcement at a news conference here today after an Umno pre-council meeting ahead of the general assembly.

When persuaded further if the announcement would involve the general election Dr Mahathir said: "That will also be a surprise. No surprise will also be a surprise."

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, reportedly said recently that there would be an element of surprise in his opening address to the four-day assembly.

On the speculated appointment of former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who has rejoined Umno, as Kelantan Umno chief, Dr Mahathir said: "Anything is possible in Umno."

"Politics is the art of the possible and the impossible," he said.

Asked if he was denying the speculation, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't deny anything but you can speculate."

Dr Mahathir was also asked by a foreign reporter about the impact that jailed former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had on Umno and how damaging was the Anwar issue to the party.

Dr Mahathir said the people generally have lost interest in Anwar, who is serving a six-year jail term for corruption.

Dr Mahathir said even PAS at its recent "muktamar" (general assembly) did not mention anything about Anwar.

"Nothing was said at all about his case, his arrest or his things," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Anwar issue has now become a "historical event which over time will be forgotten."

The prime minister told the foreign reporter that Malaysia has "a good judiciary and a good legal system."

Anwar and his adopted brother, businessman Sukma Darmawan Sasmitat Madja, are being jointly tried for sodomy.

To another question by the same reporter about deciding factors in calling for the general election, Dr Mahathir said: "We take into consideration all factors including local opinions, foreign opinions, everything."

-- BERNAMA

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