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Umno-List (Comment)

LIST OF PROJECT RECIPIENTS SHOWS ALLEGATION OF CRONYISM TO BE UNTRUE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Umno supreme council member senator Datuk Ibrahim Ali said the list of those who received government privatised projects, which was released today, shows that allegations that the Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad leadership practised cronyism and nepotism are unfounded.

"This is because the list clearly shows that the country's wealth is evenly distributed, irrespective of faction, he told reporters, here.

The list, displayed on the third day of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, here, contains details on the award of special shares and privatised projects from 1993 to 1998, when Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was finance minister before his sacking on Sept 2, 1998.

Earlier, various accusations were hurled at several leaders including Dr Mahathir and First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin that they had given contracts and shares to their cronies.

Following former Umno Youth leader Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's accusation of cronyism, a list of recipients of government projects was released at last year's Umno general assembly.

Ibrahim, who is Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said the list showed that those who criticised the government of cronyism and nepotism also benefited from privatised projects.

"Now the facts prove everything...the list shows that quite a number of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's friends benefited a lot, including Anwar's father, Datuk Ibrahim Abdul Rahman," he said.

Ibrahim, who heads the Umno special committee on defamation, said he believed there was another list containing the names of recipients of shares in the flotation of government entities like Tenaga Nasional, Telekom Malaysia Berhad, Klang Container Terminal Berhad and Hicom Berhad.

He said the number of Anwar's friends who benefited greatly from the flotation exercises was "amazing".

"This is because when the shares were floated, the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange experienced a bull run and the allocation was done when Anwar was finance minister," he said.

Delegates, observers and members of the public swamped the Dewan Merdeka foyer, where the list was displayed, to have a look at it.

Several members of the public interviewed said they supported the government for revealing the names because it gave a true picture of the cronyism issue.

"It is right for the government to release such list because the people will at least know who are the ones who benefited from government privatised projects," Ramli Ahmad, 39, a company employee, said.

He said those who were vocal about cronyism should be ashamed because it had been proven that they too had benefit.

"He (Anwar) accuses others of practising cronyism but actually his friends also got (projects)," he said.

Haji Isa Saamah, 53, of Kelantan said the move was appropriate to give the people the opportunity to assess for themselves the cronyism issue raised by some parties.

"In cronyism, only one party will get (projects) but we see that the projects are evenly distributed and all parties got, so this is not cronyism," he said.

Shukor Abdul Hamid, in his 30s, a private company employee, said that

after reading the list he realised that the allegation of cronyism and nepotism against the government was not true.

-- BERNAMA

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