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Mahathir-Umno (Anwar)

MAHATHIR SUSPECTS ANWAR WANTS TO DO AWAY WITH DPM POST

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad revealed today his suspicion that his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, had wanted to do away with the deputy prime minister post after assuming the top post.

"He (Anwar) did not want to build a house for the deputy prime minister (at Putrajaya) because he is not going to be the deputy prime minister.

"When he becomes prime minister, I suspect he doesn't want a deputy," Dr Mahathir said when asked if Anwar, then the finance minister, had approved allocation to build an official residence for the deputy prime minister in Putrajaya, the country's new federal administrative centre.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a news conference at the end of the third day of the Umno general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said since Anwar did not want the DPM post after he became the prime minister, he (Anwar) felt there would be no need for such a house in Putrajaya.

"He doesn't expect to live in the deputy prime minister's house for very long. So, there is no point in building a house for himself," he said.

Earlier, during the news conference, Dr Mahathir said that the allocation to build the prime minister's official residence in Putrajaya was approved by Anwar "because he (Anwar) was hoping to live in it."

Anwar was sacked as DPM and finance minister on Sept 2 last year and expelled from Umno the following day because the prime minister said he was morally unfit to hold the posts.

"It is for him. That is why he was very happy to approve. Nobody can spend money (government funds) without the consent of the Minister of Finance," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister said the government had proposed to build an "Istana Hinggap" for the Agong in Putrajaya but it was shot down by Anwar.

"He (Anwar) said not necessary although that would have been built by a swap arrangement by privatisation.

Anwar, said Dr Mahathir, felt that the Agong did not require such a palace in Putrajaya.

When asked if an official residence would now be built for Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in Putrajaya, Dr Mahathir said it had to be built "because there must be a deputy prime minister."

Dr Mahathir said the DPM must have a house in Putrajaya.

The prime minister said Anwar was not being very modest for not wanting to build an official residence for the DPM in Putrajaya.

Dr Mahathir also once again denied that the prime minister's official residence in Putrajaya belonged to him.

He said that if the house belonged to him, why was it that it had six rooms.

"Who was the one who prescribed six rooms while I only have two children still staying with me. The rest are not staying with me," he said.

He felt that the official residence was built for a person with six children "who hoped he would become prime minister", clearly referring to Anwar who has six children.

On the cost of the official residence, Dr Mahathir said that the actual cost of the construction of the house was around RM17 million.

Other costs involved the construction of facilities like guest room and banquet hall for foreign guests like the one in Sri Perdana (his official

residence at present), he said.

On the construction of Putrajaya, the prime minister said that all related arrangements were made by the finance minister and not him.

"He (the finance minister) was the one who made allocations and he was the one who determined the contractors," he said.

Dr Mahathir however admitted that he was involved in suggesting the design of the prime minister's office in Putrajaya, especially regarding the dome.

"But the others were arranged by the finance minister," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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