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Malaysians urged to unite, foil moves to destabilise nation

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysians need to rally together now more than ever to foil attempts at destabilising the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

In addition, he said a strong propaganda effort was being waged by certain quarters leaving many Malaysians confused.

Dr Mahathir said his nationwide tour to explain the situation to the people would start after his three-day visit to Sabah this week.

"The people's confusion stemmed from the lack of information ... it is my duty to clarify," he told reporters at a Chinese New Year lunch hosted by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding at the Parkroyal Hotel.

Dr Mahathir said he had gone on nationwide tours before, including the 1987-88 period and recently, to explain events surrounding the economic crisis.

Asked whether sections of Malaysian students he met overseas too were similarly confused, Dr Mahathir said they seemed to have been influenced by events in Indonesia.

"Purportedly, if I step down, everything will be resolved," he said. "This is not about whether my resignation would resolve matters. Instead, this is time for Malaysians to rally together."

On Umno's information drive, Dr Mahathir said while he was satisfied with the party's efforts, everyone had to play his part in providing the explanation.

"We have to maximise the effort," he said.

On whether French President Jacques Chirac raised domestic issues in their recent meeting in Paris, the Prime Minister said: "No. President Chirac says he doesn't interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries."

"Unlike some people who like to direct us on how to run our country, President Chirac says Malaysia's internal problems are not of concern to him."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on remarks by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat that while Dr Mahathir was a clever man, he had used his intelligent mind to support secularism.

The Prime Minister said Islam did not distinguish between what was described as secularism and religious matters.

"Governments in Europe were once controlled by the Church and they were of the opinion the Church should be separated from the State," he said. "In Islam, everything, including governance, are part of religion. The word secular itself came from the West."

The Prime Minister had earlier attended the Chinese New Year open house organised by the MCA at Wisma MCA and later, the Gerakan's do at the party headquarters at Menara PGRM.

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