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Mohamed-Anwar

MOHAMED RAHMAT DENIES ANY MEETING PLOT AGAINST ANWAR IBRAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat has denied a Singapore Business Times report alleging senior members of the Malaysian government and Umno met last November "to plot +Round Two+ in the war against (former deputy prime minister) Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim."

"I categorically deny that any such meeting took place," Mohamed, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) secretary-general, said in a statement today.

The minister said he was one of the leaders alleged to have taken part in the purported meeting at Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir's residence last Nov 5.

The report alleged that First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Ibrahim Ali, former deputy prime minister Tun Ghaffar Baba and former Melaka chief minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik also took part in the meeting.

Mohamed described the Jan 13 report in the Singapore daily as "an ill-intentioned attempt to undermine both the Barisan Nasional government and Umno under the leadership of Dr Mahathir."

He said the article was based on what the writer alleged was "a leaked document."

"Based on the false premises of this alleged leaked document, the writer proceeded to analyse the recent Cabinet reshuffle and the appointment of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Deputy Prime Minister," Mohamed said.

He said on further investigations, he found that the so-called leaked document was a fabricated account of the alleged meeting posted on the Internet website of supporters of Anwar's so-called movement for reform a month ago.

Anwar was sacked from the government last Sept 2 and Umno the next day and is currently on trial on four counts of corrupt practice.

"The conversation quoted by the SBT (Singapore Business Times) writer in his article is matched by the fabricated account on the Internet.

"As a Minister of Information, I am aware of the abuses that can be carried out in the free-flowing passages of Cyberworld.

"However, I would have expected a respectable newspaper like the Singapore Business Times to have been more responsible than to pick an unauthenticated article off the Internet, pass it off as a leaked document and malign the Malaysian Malay leadership," he said.

Mohamed said contrary to normal good journalistic practice, neither the writer nor the newspaper made any attempt to verify the story with him.

"It is such unethical and unprofessional reporting which tarnish the name of the foreign media," he said.

"At a time when bilateral relations between Singapore and Malaysia are on the mend, such unprovoked and ill-intentioned article by a respectable newspaper in the republic cannot be good for the healing process," he said.

Mohamed hoped that it was "pure bad journalism rather than any other agenda" by the writer or the Singapore Business Times that resulted in the article and was reproduced in (another Singapore newspaper), The New Paper tabloid.

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