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PM: Slander against leaders can undermine security

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PRIME Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the malicious lies and slander against the Government and its leaders could undermine the security of the nation.

He said with the general elections coming before April 2000, those who spread lies and slander have become more outrageous because they see that the Government and Umno are not taking any action against them.

"It has reached the point where they widely distribute tapes which ask Muslims to kill Dr Mahathir. They see the Government and Umno not taking any action so they are so brave to ask Muslims to go to war, to kill this person and that person, including me," Dr Mahathir said.

Speaking at a press conference after the Umno supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur last night, the Prime Minister said although he believes the Malays will not resort to such violence, one must not forget the case of Ibrahim Libya.

Ibrahim Libya led his followers in a violent clash with police in 1985 later called "The Memali Incident", which saw the loss of 14 lives.

Asked if he considered the spreading of lies and slander against the Government as a political agenda by certain people due to the coming elections, Dr Mahathir said: "It is a security problem."

He said the tapes do not mention the name of the person speaking but is nevertheless widely distributed. "It is very effective. People who do not know the real situation may be influenced to do something that they will later regret."

Dr Mahathir said the Umno Supreme Council discussed the problem and is thinking of action to take against those people identified for the slander.

Citing some examples, Dr Mahathir said he is alleged to have rejected religious scholars or ulamas as relations of Prophet Muhammad.

"I never said this. What I said was that not all those who say they are ulamas are indeed so. Some, because they are members of an association, claim that they are ulamas," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there are others who are members of political parties which use religion for their political aims, and they too claim to be ulamas.

"The ulamas are those who are truly religious scholars. They are not biased and do not make statements merely for their own advantage. These are ulamas and I acknowledge them," he said.

Meanwhile, on the claim by Pas that women should stay at home and not work, Dr Mahathir said this will only further weaken the capability of Muslims to develop and protect themselves.

"Umno feels that women can work. There are no restrictions on women to work. Even the Prophet's wife was a trader, while another took part in battles. Therefore to say that women should not work has no basis in religion," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked if any action will be taken against Ezam Mohd Noor, the former political secretary of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, now that he has returned to the country.

"Umno did not discuss about him. It is up to the Attorney-General to determine whether he has broken any law, and whether any action should be taken against him," he said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said

Umno has decided to expel, without the possibility for appeal, five members who contested in the Sabah elections as opposition candidates. They are Abdul Rahman Yaakub (PBS), Mazri @ Mardi Nasir (Bersekutu), Abdillah Abd Hamid (Bersekutu), Clefus Sipaun Mojingul (Pasok), and Ridi Ali Wangsa (Bersekutu).

"Another Umno member, Ansari Abdullah, who supported the opposition, has also been expelled. However he can appeal," Abdullah said.

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