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PM's nationwide tour to explain political situation

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he will begin a nationwide tour after his visit to Sabah this week to counter an "intense propaganda" that has been mounted by certain quarters to destabilise the country.

Dr Mahathir said certain quarters are out to tarnish the image of the country and destabilise harmony using various means, including an "unprecedented Chinese New Year message from jail".

Speaking to newsmen after attending a Gong Xi Fa Cai lunch hosted by Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding in Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir said this intense propaganda may confuse and influence many people.

Dr Mahathir said he does not expect everyone to accept his explanation but he has the responsibility to explain to the people of the political situation.

"I have explained to the people about the economic problems. As a politician, it is my duty (to explain to the people) about the political situation," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said although the party has programmes to explain to the people of the situation, such efforts should not end there.

"When there is such a problem, everybody should play a role and I also have the responsibility to explain. I am satisfied with Umno's performance but the party has to maximise its efforts to explain to the people."

He said Malaysian students abroad were also confused with the current political and economic problems and were so influenced by the Indonesian situation that they thought problems in Malaysia will be resolved when the Prime Minister steps down.

Dr Mahathir had met with Malaysian students in London enroute to Jamaica for last week's Group of 15 summit.

He is visiting Sabah for three days starting tomorrow as a run-up to the coming state election which may be called anytime from now until next month.

On his meeting with French President Jacques Chirac last Saturday, Dr Mahathir said the President had told him that Paris will not interfere with the domestic affairs of other countries.

"No, President Chirac said he does not interfere in domestic affairs of other countries unlike some people who would like to direct us on how to run our country. (President Chirac) says Malaysia's internal problem is not a concern to him," he said, when asked if the country's political affairs were discussed during their meeting.

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