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Mahathir-Slander

SLANDER AGAINST LEADERS A SECURITY PROBLEM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the act of slandering him and other government leaders has turned into a security problem which cannot be taken lightly.

He said such mischievous statements, including urging Muslims to kill him, seemed to be increasing and some were made on tapes which were distributed widely throughout the country.

He said the perpetrators dared to do this because the government and Umno had not taken any action yet.

"They have become so bold as to call on Muslims to wage war and kill this person and that person, including myself as a target," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here tonight.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the act of slandering was mounting because those involved knew that the general election was due by April next year.

"Although we believe that Malays in Malaysia will not do it (respond to such incitement), we must not forget that Ibrahim Libya had caused the deaths of security forces.

"They used arms to fight the government. We cannot view this matter lightly," he said.

Ibrahim Libya, whose real name was Ibrahim Mahmood, was a religious teacher who was involved in the bloody Memali incident in 1985.

Asked if the spreading of lies against government leaders was a political agenda of certain parties, Dr Mahathir said: "Basically, it is a security problem."

To another question, he said the identities of those responsible could not be ascertained.

"We do not know yet because they are cowards. They did not mention their names when they made speeches; they just distributed the tapes," he said.

Dr Mahathir said, however, it was very effective because people who did not know the actual situation might be influenced into doing things which they would regret later.

"The slander was hurled against us because they see us as being so soft and we did not take action. There are also suggestions that we take action," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the proposed Umno panel of lawyers, which was discussed at the meeting, would be asked to study all slanderous statements made against the party and its leaders.

However, the Council has not decided how the panel would function.

Dr Mahathir said the lies hurled against him included an allegation that he had told an Umno general assembly that he could not accept ulamak as descendants of Prophet Muhammad.

"That is a lie. I never said that. What I said was not everyone who claimed to be an ulamak is one.

"There are some people who consider themselves to be ulamak just because they are members of an association. Actually, they are not ulamak," he said.

He said there were also politicians with some knowledge of religion who used it for politics and claimed to be ulamak.

"This type of people I do not accept, but those who are well-versed in the teachings of Islam and do not favour any party other than the true

teachings of Islam, I acknowledge as ulamak," he said.

"It is certain that those who hurl lies are not the type that can be considered as ulamak but are slanderers," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said he could not accept people who claimed to be able to cure sickness with magical waters but sought treatment from doctors when they themselves fell sick.

The Prime Minister said he also never labelled women who wear tudung as bad.

"That I never said. But I did say that even if a person wears a tudung there is no guarantee that she will not do something prohibited.

"We know that people charged in court also wear tudung, but this is a culture and has nothing to do with whether that person is good or bad," he said.

"It is not proper to say that every one who wears a tudung is good, this is what I say," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were many more allegations which he was studying with a view to taking action against the accusers.

-- BERNAMA

TM YBY