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Mahathir-Umno (Shares)

THERE IS PROOF ANWAR PRACTISED CRONYISM, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says the government does not practise favouritism in allocating special shares and privatisation projects but this was practised by his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking at a press conference at the end of the third day of the Umno General Assembly here today, the Prime Minister said the list of recipients of shares and privatised projects issued for two years consecutively at the assembly proved that the special shares and privatisation projects were widely allocated.

"In principle, we don't practise cronyism but the (former) deputy prime minister had practised cronyism. We can prove it," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, when asked on the list of recipients of special shares and privatised projects displayed at the Putra World Trade Centre, the venue of the annual assembly.

He said the government had the list which showed that Anwar's family had become company directors and chairmen and acquired millions of shares.

He said a person should not accuse others of favouritism when that person was also favouring his or her family members by giving them shares.

The Prime Minister explained that his children also benefited from the allocation of the projects but they were only minority shareholders.

"If I want to give to my family, I would certainly have given the biggest share to them. As we can see, my children's names are in the list but they are minority shareholders," he said, adding: "But I don't agree."

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said, Anwar's cronies received quite a lot of privatised projects during Anwar's tenure as Finance Minister.

"We don't protest because many people benefited from these projects. As can be seen, the shares were distributed widely," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and Ministry of Finance were involved in the allocation of shares, the Finance Ministry had more power in the selection.

"We thought that between the two ministries there would be a checking mechanism but the Finance Minister is more powerful because although MITI makes the decision, it must be referred to the Finance Minister and the decision is made by him.

"The same goes for projects too. We found that after we had decided to award the projects to certain people because their offers appeared good, there were efforts to give part of the projects to certain companies which we knew had connection with the (former) Finance Minister," Dr Mahathir said.

On Anwar's letter from prison today which claimed that the Prime Minister's son, Mirzan was paid almost RM2 billion by Petronas to acquire his shipping business, Dr Mahathir said:

"Actually it involved a company which he had purchased at a price exceeding RM200 million and subsequently bought over by Petronas at a price of RM42 million. Recently, Petronas reaped a profit of RM200 million from the company purchased from my son.

"For (your) information, they have yet to pay my son. He (Anwar) likes to tell people that he helped my son but actually he did not help," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he could not complain if his son's company was purchased at a price which was lower than its actual value because he did

not have any say in the matter.

--BERNAMA

AD MAI AO