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Mahathir-Permatang Pauh

UMNO WILL RETAIN PERMATANG PAUH, SAYS MAHATHIR

PULAU PINANG, July 2 (Bernama) -- Umno is confident of retaining the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat in the upcoming general election although it was unsure of the majority vote, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the confidence was based on the fact that many supporters of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had not ditched Umno and the people have turned to support the government.

Anwar, who is serving a six-year jail term for corrupt practice, has been the Member of Parliament for the constituency since 1982.

Speaking at a news conference after opening Intel's RM543 million latest Premium III processor assembly and test factory in Bayan Baru, here, Dr Mahathir said, Anwar's supporters were not like the followers of former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in 1986.

Razaleigh's supporters then left Umno to support their leader, he said when commenting on his working visit yesterday to Guar Perahu located in the Permatang Pauh constituency, near here.

Dr Mahathir said he did not make any reference to or mentioned Anwar's name in his speech in Guar Perahu as the people were no longer interested to listen.

He, however, said he would explain to Umno members on the actual situation about Anwar's case to avoid confusion among them.

He said he also explained Anwar's issue when he met Pulau Pinang Umno leaders here yesterday. Permatang Pauh division leaders were also present.

Dr Mahathir visited Permatang Pauh for the first time yesterday since Anwar was sacked from the government and Umno in September last year.

On his visit to Pulau Pinang which has been described as an election campaign, he said, opposition parties started their campaigns two years ago and it is now the government's turn.

-- BERNAMA

AHH/AA TS