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Circular on dress `one more attempt to discredit PM, party'

MALACCA, Sun. - The circular purportedly issued by Umno on a dress code for members at programmes officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad "is the work of people who have nothing better to do but to slander and tell lies".

Saying that there were better ways to gain support and influence of the rakyat, Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the circular was also meant to discredit the PM and the party.

Parties unhappy with the Government would go to great extent to accomplish their "mission".

Abdullah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, was commenting on the circular said to be directed to State Umno liaison chiefs which states that Umno members, Barisan Nasional and civil servants should not wear skull caps and white turbans or sport a goatee because Dr Mahathir hates such attire.

Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob had denied that the party had issued such a circular, adding that the party headquarters had never distributed such a circular using Umno's letterhead dated July 28.

Khalil said this was yet another tactic to sow hatred against the party and its leaders.

To another question, Abdullah said the Government had not made any official appointment of "chief negotiator" to resolve outstanding bilateral issues with Singapore.

Singapore's Business Times had reported that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to appoint Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin for the task.

Daim had told The Straits Times that he had not been made chief negotiator but was willing to play any part to end the stalemate.

Abdullah admitted that Daim had done a lot to solve some of the pertinent issues.

"Maybe the PM has asked him (Daim) to discuss some of the issues (with his Singapore counterparts.) However, at the moment, no official appointment has been made," he said.

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