

08/05/2000

Dr M probing complaints (HL)

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - With four more days to go before the Umno elections, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he is investigating several complaints of delegates being offered money.

Although the advice for campaigning to be minimised had been well received by members, the Prime Minister said he had received reports on the practice of money politics occurring in places outside the city.

He warned those involved that their activities would be exposed directly or indirectly.

"Yes, campaigning has been reduced but I am still getting complaints of delegates being offered money."

He was speaking to reporters after the prize presentation ceremony of the Thomas/Uber Cup Run at Dataran Merdeka today.

He was asked whether the advice to minimise campaigning had been adhered to by the members.

Fifteen candidates bidding for senior party posts agreed to stop campaigning when they signed a pledge before Dr Mahathir recently.

However, limited campaigning is allowed for those vying for supreme council seats as some of the new faces contesting claimed that they needed to introduce themselves to delegates.

On whether the investigations could be completed before the party general assembly on Thursday, Dr Mahathir said he could not anticipate what he could achieve.

But if those involved in money politics were to win, and there was sufficient proof to show their involvement, Dr Mahathir said he would recommend to the supreme council that action be taken against the culprits.

Dr Mahathir had before this warned candidates that they risked losing their positions if they are found to be involved in unhealthy tactics in the elections.

The Prime Minister was also asked whether delegates had heeded the party's advice to go home and return to the city a day before the general assembly.

"I think there has been some effect... I don't know whether it is 100 per cent but KL is certainly a little bit quieter now. The majority have gone home."

On action that could be taken against those who refused to follow the advice, Dr Mahathir said: "If they don't, then we will know what kind of person they are. And if we can identify them, they will find that their career in Umno will be very, very limited."

Dr Mahathir gave the advice last week after reports of delegates converging here, lending credence to claims that some were trying to solicit money from candidates.

On the resurgence of poison pen letters, including those circulated on the Internet, Dr Mahathir described those behind them as cowards and unworthy people.

"This culture has been around for some time... They are afraid to come out in the open, so they resort to stabbing people in the back."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the police report lodged against former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid for alleged assault.

The Prime Minister said he would like to listen to Sanusi's explanation

on the matter.

"First, I would like to hear his explanation on what really happened. Then, we will decide on what should be done."

Asked whether the supreme council would recommend any action be taken against the Kuah State Assemblyman if the report was found to be true, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the council.

On Friday, two Malaysia Airlines customer service assistants, both 25, lodged separate reports alleging that Sanusi had assaulted them.

Police are expected to record a statement from Sanusi next week to facilitate investigations.

(END)