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Mahathir-Umno

UMNO LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE STAYS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUCHING, July 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party has no intention of doing away with its deputy president and three vice-president posts as the existing leadership structure is ideal for the moment.

"Some want more posts while others want less. So we take the middle path, we remain as we are now, No need to add or reduce," he told a news conference after visiting Ming Kiong Garden owned by entrepreneur Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing here today.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on former Umno deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba's call for the abolition of the party's deputy presidency and for the number of vice presidents to be increased to five.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz had also proposed earlier that the three vice-president posts be abolished.

Dr Mahathir said there could be a better leadership structure than the existing one but doing away with or adding the number of posts would not bring about much difference.

Dr Mahathir said it was Ghafar's personal view and whether abolishing the Umno deputy presidency and creating additional vice-president posts would put an end to tussle for positions deserved in-depth study.

"I reckon that there will still be tussles as long as position-crazy people are motivated by greed and not because they can contribute something," the prime minister said.

Asked why party elections, more often than not, only caused further splits with Umno, Dr Mahathir attributed this to candidates who ignored to uphold true democracy and would not readily accept defeat.

"Had we observed democratic principles and when we lose a contest, we accept the decision of the majority and support the winner. Democracy collapses when we sulk and stay away upon losing.

"As more and more people lose each time there is an election and then leave, the party is eventually left with no members," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who ended a three-day working visit to Sarawak today, said Umno members should discard penchant for scrambling for and buying positions for selfish ends.

"This is about moral decay. In Malaysian history, several Malay states changed hands or get colonised because their people were after positions for themselves. If we continue in this way, believe me, one day we'll even lose our own country," he said.

The prime minister was also asked about claims on opposition websites that the July 2 Gerik arms heist and the Sauk hostage-taking episode was orchestrated by Umno.

Dr Mahathir said if the claims were to be believed, he would be awed by what Mohamed Amin Mohamed Razali (leader of the Al-Ma'unah group whose members staged the arms heist ) had done by risking his life for Umno.

"If people can be taken in that Amin was willing to risk lives for Umno, then they can subscribe to the opposition claims.

"If they say it was an Umno doing, I'm very impressed by Umno's ability to order people who are openly anti-Umno to resort to doing something for which they are eventually arrested and are facing court punishment," Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali left here for Kuala Lumpur at 3.45pm.

-- BERNAMA

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