

03 FEB 2000

Mahathir-Explanation

UMNO TO HOLD BRIEFING SESSIONS TO COUNTER ALLEGATIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 3 (Bernama) -- Umno will hold information sessions for party leaders to counter the allegations made against the party and its leadership, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The prime minister and Umno president said many allegations had been made against the party such as that its leaders were involved in corruption, mega projects and misuse of government funds.

"Sometimes Umno leaders are unable to give precise explanations. That's why we will be holding specific sessions to provide the explanations," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting.

Dr Mahathir, who returned home two days ago after a three-week vacation and working trip abroad, said the majority of the people in the country still supported Umno.

However, he said many Umno members and leaders found it difficult to provide explanations on specific subjects because they did not have all the information.

For instance, he said that while he was on vacation, there were rumours that he had fallen off a horse, was seriously ill, and so on.

Umno members and leaders, when asked about the rumours, had a hard time answering because they were not given the correct information.

"But we have reminded all Umno leaders that rumours about my death and illness had been spread many times before and never been true.

"They (Umno leaders and members) could have happily said that nothing had happened. Those asking can wait until I return home or look at the evidence," said Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and party vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said 35 Umno members were sacked for supporting opposition parties in the recent general election.

Another 386 were issued with show-cause letters for carrying out actions against the party's interest during the election.

"So far we haven't got any heavyweights. We (Umno Management and Disciplinary Committee) receive reports from time to time and we process them according to when we receive them," said Abdullah, who heads the committee.

Abdullah said the Umno Supreme Council had agreed that members with clear evidence against them, and whose case had been referred to the committee, could be stopped from attending branch and divisional meetings.

"This applies to cases where the charge is clear and the wrongdoing is confirmed, but the committee has not given its interpretation. For instance, members who stood as opposition candidates and are sure to be sacked," he said.

Abdullah also said that the Supreme Council had approved the establishment of 69 new branches throughout the country.

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