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Mahathir-Sarawak

UMNO DECIDES AGAINST EXPANDING TO SARAWAK

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Umno has decided not to spread its wings to Sarawak, and as such will not recognise efforts by certain quarters to set up branches there, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said Umno felt that it was not time yet for the party to expand to Sarawak although it might be good to do so.

This was decided after the question of Umno's entry into Sarawak was discussed at length at the Umno Supreme Council meeting here today.

"If Umno goes to Sarawak it is to strengthen Barisan Nasional (BN) and not to split the BN component parties in the state. Therefore Umno has decided not to expand to Sarawak, and the move to set up Umno is invalid and not recognised by Umno," Dr Mahathir, the Umno president, told reporters after chairing the meeting.

Umno made this stand in the wake of a campaign by Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) former deputy president Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha to bring Umno into Sarawak.

Abang Abu Bakar, who announced his resignation from PBB last week, was reported to have received 138,000 membership forms from people wishing to join Umno in the state.

There are also moves to hold a rally at Padang Merdeka in Kuching on Feb 27 in support of Umno's entry to Sarawak.

Asked whether he had told Abang Abu Bakar to stop his campaign, Dr Mahathir said he had written to the organising chairman of the proposed rally to inform him that Umno would not expand to Sarawak and they should call off the rally.

Asked what action could be taken if Abang Abu Bakar continued with his efforts, Dr Mahathir said: "We don't recognise; (but) we cannot arrest him."

He believed such attempts to bring Umno to Sarawak would not jeopardise ties between the federal and Sarawak state governments because both sides enjoyed good relations.

-- BERNAMA

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