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Dr Mahathir criticises Keadilan's action

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SEREMBAN, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed regret over Parti Keadilan Nasional's action in seeking outside help to free Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians did not like outsiders to be involved in the country's affairs.

"If this is the case, then our freedom will be jeopardised," he said after a two-hour meeting with Umno leaders and members of the Jempol and Jelebu divisions at the Jempol District Council in Bandar Baru Serting, about 80km from here.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on a report that Keadilan yesterday conducted a briefing on its Free Anwar Campaign for foreign ambassadors and Opposition leaders at a hotel in Petaling Jaya.

The report stated that among those present were former United States ambassador John R. Mallot and diplomats from the US, France, Indonesia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Dr Mahathir said whatever internal problems that the people faced, they should be resolved within the country. "There is no need for us to run to others for assistance."

He said if foreigners were invited to interfere in the country's affairs, then the people should be prepared to follow their orders on who should become ministers et cetera.

He added that this had already occurred in some other countries.

Meanwhile, US Embassy information officer James Warren today described as "completely false" a report in a local Malay daily that Mallot had attended the meeting.

"The report is wrong on many counts. Mallot is not in Malaysia and did not at any time attend the briefing," said Warren.

However, he said two officers from the embassy's political section were present at the briefing.

"It was a simple, straight-forward briefing. It is a normal diplomatic practice for our officials to meet Malaysians, including politicians.

"Likewise, Malaysians and other nationalities have often been invited by US officials here and abroad to attend briefings (on various topics)," Warren said.

He said the embassy received an invitation last Tuesday from Keadilan president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

A spokesman for the British High Commission confirmed that their Second Secretary from the political section attended the briefing.

A New Zealand High Commission spokesman said they sent one of their officers after receiving an invitation. "It is routine for us to send someone whenever possible," she said.

Officials from the Canadian and Australian High Commissions could not be reached for comment, while an Indonesian information department officer said that he was unable to comment at this point in time.

"I have to obtain further information from my superiors," said the Indonesian Embassy spokesman.

Bernama, meanwhile, reports that an aide to Dr Wan Azizah confirmed that the Keadilan president conducted the closed-door and by-invitation-only briefing on her husband's medical condition.