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Mahathir-UMNO

DR MAHATHIR DEFENDS UMNO DISCIPLINARY BOARD DECISION

SINTOK, May 7 (Bernama) -- UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today defended the decision of the party's disciplinary board against those involved in money politics although some of the accused gave excuses for their actions.

"Nobody ever said they were involved but we know from the facts that they were", he said.

In fact in the court of law, the accused would claim that it was not wrong to commit rape or sodomy, he said as an example when asked to comment on the decision after holding dialogue with student leaders from all local public universities at the University Utara Malaysia (UUM) here.

He said if the Umno supreme council did not support the decision made by the board, nobody would respect it.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Prime Minister, reiterated that the board made the decision after a thorough investigation.

Six UMNO leaders were found guilty of indulging in money politics by the board on Saturday.

They are divisional heads Mustafa Kamal Mohd Nawi (Gopeng), Datuk Abdullah Omar (Muar), Datuk Zainol Md Isa (Baling), the division head candidate for Bagan Serai, Zaki Din, information heads Rahmat Abdullah (Selayang) and Mohamad Annuar Baharuddin (Gopeng).

"If we are not serious (in combatting money politics) this time, we will never be serious in the future.

"If we don't do this, we will lose support from the majority of the people. But if we do this, we may lose support from those who are not loyal to the party," he said.

Dr Mahathir said UMNO would not let the party be led by corrupted leaders.

"Through my assessment while going around the country, I found that among the factors that caused UMNO to lose support was the general perception that the party is led by corrupted leaders,"

Dr Mahathir said his view that the supreme council should accept the board's decision was not meant as a directive from the party president.

Responding to other questions, he said Umno would study whether Zainol should relinquish his Kedah exco post.

He said Umno would also consider all the appeals made by those found guilty.

Commenting on the dialogue with the student leaders, Dr Mahathir said their views did not differ much from those of the government although there were some confusion.

More than 200 student leaders and representatives from 14 public universities attended the dialogue.

-- BERNAMA

JM AO